

I WAS NOT AFRAID OF ANYTHING



SELF-WRITTEN AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MARTYR GENERAL QASEM SOLEIMANI

From his early childhood to the year 1979

Translated and edited by

Dr. Abdul Husayn Gonzalez

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Front and Back Cover Background: Image of original handwriting of the autobiography of Martyr General Qasem Soleimani written with his injured hand and fingers.

ان زحیہ میں نہ ہوا کسیر

I was not afraid of anything

We are nation of Imam Hussain (as)

Martyr General Qasem Soleimani

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Editor's Note

I thank God for the valuable opportunity to do translation of autobiography of this great heroic human being of modern times whose martyrdom shook the whole world. Martyr Qasem Soleimani was epitome of utmost heroism, military leadership, unparalleled courage, self-sacrifice, purity of soul, piety, being sincere follower of *wilayate faqih* and with unusual pain of oppressed in his heart. His personality attracted me, even whenever I only saw his photos. When I visited his grave in Kerman in May 2022, I decided to do translation and sought God's help. However, due to work overload, it was delayed. But Alhamdulillah, it was done with God's help. While doing translation and editing, few points were paid attention to:

1. The translation was done keeping in view the needs of native English speakers. In many places, idiomatic translation was done and also phrases were added to the original Persian version for easy reading of the audience.
2. Throughout the book, approximate Gregorian year was added to the Iranian Solar Hijra year used by the author. In some places, month and date were also added.
3. Original footnotes were kept as such. However, some of them were not used and few were added for the basic information of readers.
4. An inspiring letter of Martyr Soleimani to his daughter, Message of the Leader Sayyid Ali Khamenei after his martyrdom and the Last will of Martyr Qasem Soleimani are added to provide a better insight for the readers about the personality of this great human being.

I thank sister Fatima Mazhari, Mohammad Yahya, Dr. Heiat and Dr. Zarei for their help and to sister Zainab Martinez for graphics.

Dr. Abdul Husayn Gonzalez

Written note of Ayatullah Khamenei on the book

The self-written autobiography of the martyr Lieutenant General Haj
Qasem Soleimani

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In the name of God

Everything that highlights the memory of our dear martyr is eye-catching and heart touching. Although God placed his memory at the highest level of prominence and thus gave him the worldly reward for his sincerity and righteous deeds, but all of us also have a duty in this regard. I haven't read this book yet, but apparently it can be a step in this direction.

Whatever sustenance we have, God has provided us with His grace.

Sayyid Ali Khamenei

1st October, 2020

Introduction

On the morning of Wednesday, December 16, 2020, God blessed us with the opportunity to visit the supreme leader of the revolution, may my life be sacrificed for him. His Holiness met with the members of the commemoration committee of martyr Qasem Soleimani and his family members.

I had brought him a gift on the behalf of my father. This gift was a biography written by Haj Qasem himself, which we planned to publish in the form of a book on the occasion of his martyrdom anniversary.

What was with me was actually a copy or a first version of the book. At the end of the meeting, I presented the text to Leader. He asked questions about it and accepted this gift with affection.

A few days after that meeting and in the final minutes of finalizing the book, I received a text from the office of the supreme leader of the revolution.

He blessed us and before reading, he had written a personal note in memory of his “faithful soldier”. It was a text full of compassion and magnanimity that was like a soul on the body of this book.

“I thank you, God, that after your beloved virtuous servant Khomeini, you have put me on the path of following another virtuous servant of yours, who is oppressed much more than his righteousness, a man who is the wise sage of today's Islam, Shiism, Iran and the political world of Islam, and is none but dear Khamenei, for whom may my life be sacrificed.”¹

And now a few lines about the present work:

¹ From the last will of Martyr Qasem Soleimani.

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Writing this introduction is not an easy task for me. Daughters know better how difficult it is to transfer into written words, the heavy amount of love and affection between father and daughter, that too at the beginning of a book after a father's martyrdom.

Even when my father was among us, he was a ``martyr'', we all seemed to know this fact and it was the truth and reality we lived with. Whenever I thought about this fact that there will come a day when he would not be there and I would be alive, my whole being was overwhelmed with shock and helplessness. It was a nightmare that I always ran away from.

Qasem Soleimani in his life, like a military commander should be, was highly disciplined and precise. He had a plan for every minute of his life. His working hours and responsibilities, most of the time, did not leave any time for his personal affairs. However, one thing was an exception in his life: reading and writing. Haj Qasem considered it necessary for both himself and his children to read. His choice of books was wide: from Persian poetry and foreign novels to historical and political books, and from memoirs and biographies to the military books.

His reading method was also interesting in its own way. He would read book very carefully. He would write notes at the beginning, middle and end of the book. And sometimes, he would even write his detailed notes in a separate notebook. He used to mark and underline many books with colored markers. Yes, that's how he used to be familiar with books.

I was not afraid of anything is the biography written by Haj Qasem himself with his injured hand. The story of the life of a great man from the heart of a remote village in Kerman, who has narrated for you several different periods of his simple and charming life. This is the

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story of the formation of the character of a man who rose from a shepherd to a position as high as the skies.

During the last year, many attempts have been made to write biography of Haj Qasem by several writers and researchers. All of these are efforts have arisen from sacred and honorable feelings. But due to fact that various aspects of his life have remained unknown, the published information is either distorted or inaccurate. And now it is possible to fill this gap.

I would really like those who have seen Haj Qasem Soleimani only in military uniform to know how he grew up. *I was not afraid of anything* is the beginning of a great mission and knowing reality of a great man.

Zainab Soleimani

December, 2020

Foreword

The self-written autobiography of martyr Qasem Soleimani is in your hands.

This special text is full of practical tips for self-improvement and development. The language and expression of the text is so clear and transparent that it takes every reader with it. This short manuscript shows the untold aspects of the great legend of high ambition and the most popular shining star of the modern age, so that we can really know him from afar, the gradual formation of his unique personality: From his childhood until the age of 22 years of Qasem Soleimani.

I was not afraid of anything is the first published book written by this proud martyr, Lt. Gen. Qasem Soleimani. The title of the book is derived from the text of the book which is repeated in it and is also in line with his most prominent characteristic in the minds and hearts of the people, media and governments of the world.

This unfinished biography is not voluminous, but it has outstanding features. The text of the biography was written by Haj Qasem himself, and so it is a first-hand document. His narrative is full of details and filled with accurate mental images, with a warm and friendly style. Those who only know him as a warrior and brave commander, may not believe that this pen and narration is originally from that same man. During last few years before his martyrdom, Haj Qasem Soleimani wrote his life in detail, of course, in the limited time available to that hard-working military commander, and even if he wrote it over a period of time, he couldn't have written more than this...

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This work has two parts: The first part is 'writing' which is the typed version of this biography with very little editing. The second part of the book is the 'original manuscript' that is the complete version in the author's own handwriting.²

To prepare this autobiography, we had to look at it as a story from various aspects: the narration of the author's life, the specific style of language of the author, the Kermani style of writing, events written in compact manner, the beginnings, the implicit feelings, the additional points and the wide diversity of readers. It was necessary to explore these aspects. However, what we were required to do as a first step was to present the manuscript in a reliable manner without any error in it.

The result of many reviews and discussions finally led us to offer the text for eager readers in two versions: one is the "mirror" version that is the document exactly the same as the handwritten manuscript and only has a few additions of parenthesis. The other version is a bit "Fluent Reading", that has been prepared for easier reading by removing the parentheses and making style uniform. We have hosted the first version on the website of Haj Qasem School (www.soleimany.ir) for curious eyes of the researchers. We printed the second version on paper, along with the handwritten image, and now it is in front of your eyes.

In the course of preparing and especially editing the work, we took following steps:

1. Properly selecting words: The author's handwriting had special features and some parts were difficult to read.

² The original handwritten Persian manuscript is not included in this book.

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2. Matching: We carefully matched the handwritten text with the text of selected words. The quality of chosen characters was good. However, at 173 places in text, we corrected misplacements or additions or mistakes, and we were relieved because of the similarity of selected and replaced words with handwritten version. Needless to say, there were 25 words in the handwritten version that were not legible at all. We brought them in the “Mirror version” with a sign (?) and reconstructed them in the “Fluent reading” version according to the context and by smart guess.

3. Formal editing: The principles of editing dictate that we should not edit the author's original text written in the past and we are only allowed to edit it formally. For this reason, the range of changes in the editing of this work was limited to following the guidelines of the Persian literature and adjusting the numbers and inserting the symbols and dots on alphabets. Of course, because as this text was to be read by a very wide diversity of people, we made it a little heavier in formal editing.

4. Additions: Very little, only at those places where it was necessary to understand a sentence, we added words to the text of the autobiography. These words are included in the parenthesis in the “Mirror Version”, and in the “Fluent Version” text, there is no parenthesis. Statistically, we only added 111 parentheses, which is a total of 12,133 words in the text, almost one parenthesis for every 110 words.

In addition, all parentheses in both versions are from the author himself.

5. Footnotes: In order to better understand the course of the biography, we found it necessary to add footnotes to some words that

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needed explanation. The result was that 143 footnotes of research were added in the book.³

I was not afraid of anything is considered as the first book of the Haj Qasem School Publications. Thank you for this good beginning, which is an opening door for different introduction and recognition of the enviable life of that unique and beautiful existence. We hope that the lovers of Martyr Soleimani, by reading these lines, will have clear eyes, strong hearts and full hands. May the ups and downs of this blessed autobiography become a shining path to successful life of future generations.

Haj Qasem School Publications

³ In this book, few original footnotes were deleted and some were added by the editor keeping in view the needs of English speaking audience.

The Autobiography

My sister Hajar knows our family⁴. In the science of genealogy⁵, clan has prime importance. According to the narrations of all elders, our ancestor, the son of Qurban, along with his brother, who according to one narrative, were maternal brothers, and according to another, were the elders of Fars region. It is not known whether they were exiled or emigrated for some reason. They come from the Neyriz⁶ of Fars to the origins of Halil River⁷. This river starts from its origins of altitudes above 3,500 to nearly 4,000 meters and flows over a distance of more than 300 kilometers to Jazmourian Lake⁸ at the end of Kerman province and the beginning of the border of

⁴ Family (*asheera*) here means paternal family. In a more general sense, it is same as clan, family, and descent. It is the nomads who are nomadic in Iran and go to the summer and winter seasons. Soleimani clan belongs to nomads of Lornejad, Kerman, and probably one of the divisions of Mahni clan. Centuries ago, the vast Mahni clan (*Abusaeidi*) migrated from Mehneh Khorasan to many places in Iran, and about 270 years ago, a large number of them came from Fars or Boyer Ahmad to settle in Kerman.

⁵ The scientific study of record or account of the ancestry and descent of a person, family, clan or group.

⁶ Neyriz is a historical city in the south and east of Fars province near Bakhtegan Lake. Famous for fresh pomegranates and durable knives and abundant mines.

⁷ Halil River is the largest river in the southeast of Iran. It stretches for some 390 kilometers running in the Baft, Jiroft and Kahnuj districts of Kerman Province, I.R. Iran and ends in Jazmourian wetland.

⁸ It is a large lake at the lowest point of Hamun-e Jazmourian, an inland basin or depression in southeast Iran, straddling the provinces of Kerman and Sistan and Baluchistan.

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Baluchistan of Iran. After settlement, they inhabited in the lands around this river from the beginning to a radius of 15 to 20 kilometers.

Mir Qurban had four sons named Wali, Muhammad, Hussain and Ibrahim and a daughter whom he married to a person named Alidad. These four sons, each of them, gradually formed a clan, and within each clan, a clan of their sons was formed. Therefore, 'Soleimani Clan' of Izmir Qurban established four male clans and one female clan, they are still known by the same name: Muhammadi, Hussaini, Ibrahimi or Amirshakari, Mash Wali, Alidadi. My parents are from Dotireye Zarali, which is from Mash Wali. My father is from the Ibrahimi clan and his mother was from the Lori clan. My family, longitudinally and transversely, in root and in kinship has been formed in this way.

For some reasons, the Ibrahimis have had acquired more properties. Of course, my father, gradually during his father's time, sold some of his properties and gradually three classes were formed within the clan, the ruling class were the khans, which after the death of Mir Qurban, every great khan was considered as a Soleimani clan.

There was a person named Garami Khan and after him, several sons named Muhammad Ali Khan, Hussain Khan, Saifullah Khan, Ahmad Khan and Waliullah Khan were born. My father's relatives were from the Ibrahimi tribe, Lashkar Khan and.... Of course, due to my family roots, I did not see any corruption during my lifetime. Generally, they were responsible for settling complaints and dispute resolution and general protection of the tribe and relationship with the government, and they had several properties. Among them, one of their best properties belonged to my father, and my father also had a share in these properties due to his and my mother's family inheritance. My

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mother, the daughter of Asadullah, and her mother, Zahra, were both from Tireye Zarali.⁹

Now, about my mother's family relations: Apparently, after the marriage ceremony, my mother married my father at the age of 14 years. Usually, the marriage period in the tribe lasts up to two years, and in any case, these two got married.

Jahangir narrates: On the day of your father's wedding, he was riding a camel. The camel got loose and ran away, and the groom was riding on it! After some time, they were able to find and return the camel with groom riding on it.

During the first few years of marriage, my father lived a very poor life. But slowly, he became owner of livestock, in a way that sometimes he hired one or two shepherds. The first fruit of their life was a girl named Sakineh¹⁰, who died at the age of three due to whooping cough. After a short time, my sister Hajar and then my brother Hussain were born, and then I was born in 1337 S.H. (1957 A.D.).

In a very cold winter, I suffered from measles. My parents lost hope for my recovery. All the medicines from local sources were used. But there was no improvement. According to my father's words, while the snow was knee-high, they tied me on my mother's back and moved to Rabor¹¹ for a doctor's examination. In any case, after some time, God's providence was such that I survived and remained alive.

⁹ Apparently it's a family lineage in the tribe.

¹⁰ Also written as Sakina or Sakinah.

¹¹ Rabor (Rahbor) is a mountainous and cold city, 175 km from Kerman, 35 km from Baft, and 7 km from Qanat-e Malek (also known as Kahnau Malek or Kahnu Malek). The birthplace of Martyr Qasem Soleimani is here, near the village of Qanat-e Malek, Javaran Rural District, Hanza county, Rabor city, Kerman province, I.R. Iran.

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My love for my mother and maybe my mother's mutual love for me led me to be breastfed for three years instead of two years. The day of my separation from my mother's loving heart was a difficult day. Little by little I got used to it. But it took many years until my mother's breasts dried up and she no longer had milk in her chest.

Gradually I moved away from my mother's arms to the chador fastened behind her. Sometimes, from morning to noon, I was on her back, inside the closed chador, and she was working all the time, either she used to harvest or collect the crops or did sweeping of the house or milking the herd, and then she would cook food and bread. And what a peace I had with her! I used to sleep there. In my opinion, my mother was also relieved by my body's warmth.

Gradually with walking, I also started working. I used to follow my mother, barefoot or in rubber or plastic shoes that my mother would buy from traveling cocoons¹² by giving them some fluff or wool. I followed her like a duckling. Several times a day I would fall down or the thorn would pierce in my feet and hands! Blood used to dribble from my toes, and my mother would slowly remove the thorns from my feet with a sewing needle and gently apply ointment on the wounds with Ashtrak¹³.

I loved the arrival of spring. Our winter was very harsh. We wore the plastic shirt that we used to call "Beshur and Beposh"¹⁴ and Ms. Iran, a woman of dignity, used to sew it without any underclothing or cover.

¹² These were middlemen who exchanged the surplus products of nomads and villagers with the goods of urban shopkeepers.

¹³ Ashtrak or Vosha is a medicinal and industrial plant that grows especially in Yazd and Kerman.

¹⁴ Means 'Wash it and wear it'.

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Sometimes we used to wrap our night covering or our mother's chador around us due to the extreme cold.

My mother used her headcloth to tie on my head tightly so that, in her own words, the wind would not enter my ears. We used to constantly grind our teeth due to the extreme cold. In winters, my mother used to give us some dried food¹⁵ that was like a stone (cooked and dried turnips). It took nearly half a day to chew a turnip. She used to give some shisht (Wild olive)¹⁶ and roasted wheat and nuts, sometimes and sometimes not. Mostly in winters, my siblings and I used to dig, cook and eat sibu¹⁷ (potatoes) under the fire pit. As soon as the sky was clear, we used to rush towards sunshine and warmed ourselves next to Samad's house, that had a good sunny roof.

Little by little, when I grew up, in winters, our games were playing with snow and playing kago¹⁸. Hussain Jalali used to come from Zardlo¹⁹ and play with the children. He used to severely hit everyone! To escape from the winter and its severe coldness and hardship, we longed for the arrival of spring.

Spring was the season of blessing for us: Firstly, escape from the bitter cold of winter and secondly, it was the season of our migration.

¹⁵ Maideh in local language.

¹⁶ Senjed also known as Persian Olive. Its sweet in taste.

¹⁷ People of Kerman call potatoes cooked under ashes and fire as "sib kholo". Khol is same as ash.

¹⁸ Kagu Bazi Yakog Bazi or Kogo Bazi perhaps means Kabak Bazi (Game of Partridges). Partridges sometimes bury their heads under the snow or hide in the snow. The children of the region also called it 'Gaym Bashek Bazi'. It's like hide and seek game played during winter season by kids of Rabor.

¹⁹ One of the villages of Hanza county in Baft region.

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As soon as Nowruz was over, after the end of the 13th day²⁰, the women used to believe it to be bad omen, and so our tribe would move to the heights of Tangal²¹ which was a thin forest²² with wild almonds that was covered with blossoms and flowers in spring and there was a large garden in Tangal that had all kinds of fruits. There was a deep and green valley full of Bunder²³ walnuts, where the sunshine doesn't reach forest ground due to the intense entanglement of the walnut trees, and dozens of water springs flowed from its smaller valleys and formed a small river. Very tall willows and the towering aspen trees of the garden created a very large shade.

My mother used to put Palas²⁴ on the banks of water streams and the jogs²⁵ were pulled. The rushing and rolling sound of the water passing through the middle of our black tent used to give sense of purity. Although, poverty and hard work did not give the opportunity to understand this purity.

Spring is the season of milk and yogurt; the bleating sound²⁶ of baby goats and lambs and the noise of milking goats and ewes. The

²⁰ Means 13th of Farvardin, the first month of Iranian year (Solar Hijra (S.H.)).

²¹ Honi Tangal, six kilometers southeast of Rabor city, is an area full of snow and abundant in plants, which was the destination of Qeshlaq (winter season) of their nomads.

²² Sparsely spread

²³ Refers to Hanza Port is 30 km away from Rabor city. Bunder is the beginning and entrance of the valley, which is a cool and sunless place.

²⁴ Palas or black nomadic tent is the main shelter of nomads. It is woven with goat's hair and supported with a vertical stick in the middle and some sticks and ropes around it. There is also another type of palas: a colored rug with a cloth underlay, tablecloth and carpet.

²⁵ Jog is a fence that was made with reeds and stretched around the black tent (palas).

²⁶ Ba ba sound of baby goats

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women of the family, who had all their tents stuck together and were carrying milk bottles, took such care that not a drop of milk would fall on the ground. Those who had little milk, shared “cups of milk”; That is, for example, they gave the milk container for a few days. Then, after a few days, they would get back a bigger milk container. This usually happened in early summer when the goats were running low on milk. At that time, when we asked my mother for yogurt in the afternoon, she would say: “No, Nene! Today it's the turn of your aunt to give us milk” or “It's Iran's turn, dear Mash lady”.

In the spring, with the children of the Ali Khani family, Taj Ali, Ahmad and Samad's children, we used to go to school on foot from Tangal Mountains to the wintering village of Qanat-e Malek. Our midday lunch was on our backs, which was generally a stack or two of bread and some seeds of dried nuts or cheese with seeds of dried nuts. Sometimes, when Ibrahim, son of my mother's maternal uncle, used to bring some dates²⁷ in a basket²⁸ from Garmsir²⁹, they used to put some dates in our belongings.

We were so used to simple and normal pleasures and difficulties, that all these were part of our life, but due to very tough routine and continuous working, we felt neither happiness nor difficulty. As if both of these had become a part of our existence.

There was no bathroom in those days. My mother used to heat a large copper pot called “pot” filled with water on the fire. Then she used barley water to cool and heat it and washed our heads and

²⁷ Dates are put in the middle of the dough and cooked in Kholi Kharmai.

²⁸ Basket called as ‘saft’ is woven from palm leaves.

²⁹ A land that is especially very hot. Relatively warm area where the climate is not too cold in winter. It's usually desert area where date trees are found.

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bodies with laundry soap and sometimes washed with Ushnan³⁰ (a kind of plant).

We had two sets of clothes and one rubber or plastic calloused shoe. My mother usually boiled the clothes very hard in boiling water because there were a lot of cockroaches and lice. Then she would wash with flowing water at the river bank and dry them. At that time, they used to come from the city and sprayed pesticides in the houses. My mother used to sprinkle DDT³¹ powder on our clothes, which was very dangerous, to somehow disinfect against lice and fleas.

My mother always made some nutritious paste³², the size of a Javal³³. Sometimes in the afternoon, she would make this paste for us with a little amount of ground (minced) meat (qorma)³⁴. I remember that later when I came to the city, my mother had accompanied me. In front of the people of city, we prepared and offered them, everyone thought we were eating dough! But it was very delicious.

Slowly, in the severe winter cold, we grew up with our bodies half-covered.

³⁰ Also called 'green ushnan' and 'launderers' potash'. It has narrow branches and small leaves and a salty taste. Nomads use it for a variety purposes such as fuel, color stabilization, camel feed, etc. It has many medicinal properties such as for treating smallpox, gout, baldness, jaundice, etc. It is often used for cleaning and washing as a soap substitute.

³¹ Abbreviation of dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane. It was used as an insecticide.

³² This paste is a type of nutritious food that was prepared by mixing ground wheat germ and barley, oil and spices and made like a paste with some water and eaten.

³³ Jawal or Joval is a woolen bag or blanket placed on four legs.

³⁴ Qorma here means meat cut into pieces and fried in oil. In those days, when there were no refrigerators and freezers to store meat, they used to fry and then salted the mutton, and sometimes put it in the cleaned rumen of the sheep to keep it for longer time.

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From the very beginning of my childhood, I had a state of fearlessness. I was ten years old. It was summer and school was closed. Our harvest season was from dawn to sunset. My father had a dangerous horned bull that everyone was afraid of. He put me on this bull to take it to another village that was 15 kilometers away from our house and was greener and my aunt's house was there. The proud bull refused to obey the command and kept hitting my little feet with its head. I went through this desert, alone riding on this dangerous animal to my aunt's village.

One night, my father took me with him to the piles of harvested wheat³⁵ on the bank of the river, which was far from our house. At night, herds of wild pigs (boars) attacked the piles of harvested wheat. My father and I went to the top of a fig tree. The herd of boars attacked the stacks of harvested wheat. My father was making a noise to scare them away but the wild animals did not care to listen to my father's noise. In the middle of the night, they destroyed part of the harvested wheat, and my father and I were watching them from the top of the fig tree.

Of course, it was not always bad. But from the beginning of winter until the second month of spring, all our eyes were on the grains of wheat, which ran out one after another. My mother was very careful not to get into trouble. Therefore, to have blessings, she would sometimes put some 'curd' (green peas) inside the wheat. Once or twice a week, she would cook silik³⁶ (millet) bread with the wheat and give it to us, which was the bread of the poorest people.

³⁵ After harvesting, the piles of wheat are placed on the top of each other to be pounded and crushed.

³⁶ Silik millet is the local millet of the people of Rabor city. In the season of millet harvest, they grind it into flour and bake bread with it on a pan.

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During the same time, there was not a day when our house was empty of guests. We used to eat rice two or three times a year, which was called "qubooli"³⁷. No one cooked alone, but the women of the tribe, who were all cousins, paternal and maternal cousins, and aunts, would gather together and cook delicious Aash Nazri for the rain or at the beginning of the journey and offer it to the shrine of Sayyid Khoshnam or Pir Khoshnam³⁸. Some women of the family would also make a vow of sweets and put it inside the ziyareth shrine. We used to go and take the sweets and eat it!

Haji Rafi, whose ancestry I did not understand, had a small village. He used to cook halim once a year on the Day of Ashura and load three or four big pots full of halim³⁹. All the surrounding villages, each one with a badieh (a large measuring cup) or a pot, would go to Haji's house and receive halim.

My maternal grandfather, Haj Abdul Khaliq, had gone from here to Mecca with a horse and a donkey, and his entire journey had taken him a year. In some years, when it was very difficult and hunger made many people miss it, they used to eat wild vegetables.

There was a house in our neighborhood that didn't have a roof. When my mother used to bake bread, their children used to stand, watching. The standing of those two girls is still vivid in my mind. My mother used to give them several bunches of bread and this action was

³⁷ Qubooli rice is a type of cooked rice dish that is mixed with legumes such as peas and beans.

³⁸ There are several shrines of Sayyids in the region, where people used to go to intercede with God and to pray for their needs. Apparently, "Sayyid Khoshnam, Pir Khoshnam" are the names of some of them. It is not clear which of them was intended by the author.

³⁹ After preparing all the ingredients of the food, as they put everything in the pot and put on the fire, they then entered the stage of loading or loading the food!

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repeated every day. Sometimes my brother Hussain would get upset and fight with them. But hunger made them not to move until they received the bread!

Passing out of the school and receiving the pass report of acceptance for 13th grade did not matter to me. What was more important was the sticks⁴⁰ soaked in water stream used for punishment. Every morning, when we saw that a bunch of sticks were placed inside the water stream, it shivered our body with fear.

One morning the principal of school pulled me out of line. He told me to show the backs of my hands. I showed. He started hitting with a wooden stick soaked in water. My father, who was sitting in the sun, heard my cry. The distance between the school and our house was forty steps. He called: "Mr. Manager, his skin is black." Why do you hit him? No matter what you hit, it won't turn white!"

At that time, our school was shared between boys and girls. My sister Azar and my brother Hussain were with me. When the teacher beat us, my sister, who was very brave, attacked the teacher with a small stick and cursed him with tears and said: "Why are you hitting our brother?"

It was a difficult time. Those years were cold and snowy winters. My father bought a pair of winter rubber boots. But the snow was higher than my waist and the boots didn't do anything. In addition, because it was rubber, it added to the severity of the cold! One day, Bahram

⁴⁰ Known as 'tarkeh' are the soft and tender branches of trees kept soaked in water so that they become wet inside and when used for punishment, severely hit the body.

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Faraji, who was coming from Gunjan⁴¹, got frostbite and was brought unconscious to the school.

The school heater, like my mother's oven, gathered us all around it. It was as if we wanted to embrace this furnace of fire. The cold, the ruthlessness of the principal and hunger, all of them, had joined hands together.

The teacher of school was responsible for everything. At that time, the Teaching Corps⁴² was established. The teaching corps members were very powerful. Sometimes they carried out the order of the head quarter. Every year a new teacher was assigned to school. The best of them was Mr. Tashri, the first teacher of my first year of elementary school. He was very kind.

Giving biscuits to the students had become recently popular and when the biscuit cartons were emptied, they gave us the smell of Gorji biscuits sweeter than mother's chest! When the break time bell would ring, the manager would distribute the biscuits. How sweet it was! It was the first time I ate biscuits. I still have the sweetness of its taste in my mouth.

The school principal was usually the guest of one of the residents every night and the students were obliged to clean and sweep his room. In any case, the principal had greatness.

It was a good year. The spring had passed long enough, the bushes were all green and under and above them were full of grass, flowers

⁴¹ Gunjan is a village 9 kilometers from Rabor city of Kerman.

⁴² High school (K 12) diploma holders used to voluntarily join Teaching Corps and after four months of training in military centers, they were given task to impart basic literacy to the inhabitants of remote villages and towns for two years. In the end, they could become school teachers.

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and lakku leaves⁴³. The sheep were satiated with food and males ran after females. The sound of their bells made them intoxicated with happiness. Clear blue water, like silver, flowed from all the valleys.

It was completely dark. We moved towards our nomadic tents (palas). In the darkness of the night, our rubber shoes, that were torn and I had repaired them 4 times with hot tongs, were slipping out of my feet. All the tips of my toes were injured and bloody due to hitting the rock while walking. There wasn't a day that we didn't get injured by a thorn in our feet. For days, we used to remove thorns with needles. There was no news of socks at all. We had two rubber shoes a year, that we bought in return for our pachini⁴⁴ or walnuts. Our shirts were washed and worn at the same time. Aunt Kubra or Ms. Iran, a woman of dignity, used to sew our shirts.

The air was cold and getting colder and I felt a little coldness in my thin body, while I was only wearing an old school shirt. The valley was very dark, and we three kids of ten and eleven years old filled the valley with our singing. My Kurdish⁴⁵ voice was better than all of them.

Ewes knew the way back home well based on their instincts and were moving towards home defiantly. That year a leopard was seen in the valley. There was also a rumor of a bear on the top of the walnut trees. The extra noise and sounds were mostly to scare wild animals and also to comfort us.

⁴³ Maybe it's gulalaku: A weed that blooms with the first spring rain.

⁴⁴ After shaking the walnut tree, a number of walnuts are thrown here and there and some would remain hidden from the eyes while gathering. Collecting the hidden walnuts is called 'pachini' of walnuts.

⁴⁵ Kurdish singing here means may be singing four verses with loud voice.

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I heard village men shouting from a distance. Haj Azizullah was worried before everyone and came to welcome us. He was carrying an axe (made from maple wood)⁴⁶ with him that was sharp enough to split the head of a person, and said with special affection: "You guys are late, we are worried."

The light of oil lamps could hardly be seen from inside the tents. The sheep were quickly separated by instinct and each rushed to their owner's house. The bleating sound of the lambs created a beautiful scene. I saw God's power in this moving scene. How has God given this animal without intellect, as much awareness as it really needs, that in absolute darkness, it recognizes the owner's house and its lamb together!

My elder brother Hussain, who now considered himself older than my father in a way and tried to apply this elderliness over me with generally giving orders and prohibitions in a coercive manner, such as ordering me: Quickly count the sheep and see that we have not lost anything in the dark. This census was not based on numbers, but on the special names that were given to each animal, he followed them one by one: white-headed, peacock, black-headed, etc.

My mother's black komajadon⁴⁷ was next to the fire, which showed that the food was cooked. Its pleasant smell stimulated the nose. From the smell of the food, I knew what it was: My mother's lentil rice dish would make one speechless! We didn't eat rice more than a few times a year, our luck was when we had guests.

⁴⁶ Keekum or Keikum is a type of maple tree. Its wood is strong enough to make axes and sticks, and it has beautiful knots for carving and inlaying. They also called it bargeh.

⁴⁷ The copper pot in the door that is placed under the ashes and fire is called komajadon.

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Sayyid Muhammad had come. Sayyid used to recite rouzeh⁴⁸ for the martyrs of Karbala. He used to stay at our house for three to four months a year. The best food was for him. My parents respected him very much. When Sayyid would come, we would get full meal. He was a close friend of my father. After his mule was washed away, he came to our house less often.

I didn't pay much attention those days, later I realized that in our big clan, no one is as hospitable as my mother and father. There was always a guest in our house. While me and my other four siblings, two of whom were older than me, we always had our eyes on the flour mill.

My mother was very careful. Sometimes she would mix wheat flour with barley and karo⁴⁹ flour. Sometimes, when we did not have guests, she would cook millet bread once or twice a week. In those days, barley and millet bread was the bread of the poor, today it is the opposite, if it is found, maybe millet and barley bread is more expensive than the wheat bread.

In any case, due to the firm belief that existed in our house that "the guest is God's beloved", I never remember that a guest was ever frowned upon or ignored. Most of the guests were strangers who arrived at our clan's place at noon on the way to other villages and asked for tea, tea with cardamom and clove. My mother wouldn't not give it to us. It was awesome! Then, if it was near noon, they would have lunch or dinner. Sometimes bread and yogurt or bread and gore

⁴⁸ An elegy recited for the martyrs of Karbala or other great martyrs of Islam. It is recited in a specific traditional style in different cultures and languages.

⁴⁹ Karo flour: People of Kerman sometimes have flour made from black seeds called Karo. The appearance of this seed is black and hard, but when it is milled, the inside is white and smells like peas.

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yogurt⁵⁰, eggs or warm water⁵¹. If the guest was very important, they would sacrifice a rooster and prepare it with rice for him.

When I was a child, my grandmother died in our house. She was a very pious, beautiful and tall woman. I could hear the screams of my mother and aunt Sughra, whose house was very close to ours. My uncle, who was a Qur'an teacher, lived in the village of Bagh Shah⁵², which was as far as a qiyeh⁵³ from us. My grandmother had recently passed away.

Our house had a room without a door or window, which was dark because it was long and without windows. Its roof was covered with wood and sheng⁵⁴, and the walls were made of raw clay. From inside the room that was our kitchen, storeroom, sleeping and living place, a door opened to another room which was our storehouse. In the summer season, they collected straw and bideh willows⁵⁵ to give them to the sheep in winter when there was no fodder or because of the snow and the sheep could not go out.

There was a woman named Hosnieh who was from our nomadic tribe. An almost 50 year old woman who apparently had tuberculosis. Everyone had abandoned her. My father went and carried her on his back and brought her to our house. My mother took care of her for

⁵⁰ A mixture of milk and yogurt becomes a simple and healthy food called gore yogurt.

⁵¹ Hot water is the same as Kermani Eshkene with meat, potato, onion, turmeric, tarragon, etc.

⁵² Bagh Shah or Bagh Shariati village, Javaran village, Hanza district, Rabor city, Kerman province.

⁵³ Qiyeh means loud voice. It means that if we used to shout loudly from Qanat-e Malek, they would hear it in Bagh Shah.

⁵⁴ Maybe it is sheng, which is a kind of plant. Maybe it's the sparrow's tongue tree.

⁵⁵ Bideh means hay mixed with dry grass.

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four years until Hosnieh passed away. I never saw my mother or father talking about it.

In any case, my mother prepared a completely full plate of rice for both. But for my father and Sayyid Muhammad, the plate was full. Sayyid objected to my mother. He used to say to my mother: “Khawahar (sister), why did you make him partner of old man like me?” And now he would eat it all!” In any case, we ate until fully satiated.

My father used to offer prayers on time. Maybe a few people were praying at that time, but my father was very strict about praying his namaz in prime time. He recognized the time of morning (fajr) prayer from the star and the afternoon (zohr) prayer from the shadow. Of course, at that time, nobody had anything to do with proper recitation of Surah Hamad and other Surahs. Therefore, there were probably many mistakes in the recitation of prayers.

In the same way that he was devoted to prayer, he was also devoted to halal and haram⁵⁶. Everyone in our clan knew him very well. At that time, he had gone to Mashhad and so was well known as “Mashdi Hasan”. He used to give his zakat⁵⁷ whether it was in wheat, barley or sheep to Sayyid Muhammad on time.

Another point that was rare in the nomads was that my father was a regular bather. Even in the cold of winter, he bathed in the aqueduct of village! I still remember that he discussed this issue with my mother twice. Once upon a time, it was the month of Ramadan. We all loved the month of Ramadan since childhood. They used to put School

⁵⁶ The allowed and forbidden acts and practices in Islam.

⁵⁷ Zakat is a form of obligatory charity in Islam paid from one's belongings. It is paid from 9 commodities including wheat, barley, sheep, cow, etc.

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Principal's big radio on two sticks, behind the wall of the school building, and turn it on at dawn. It was heard from three to ten.

That year, the month of Ramadan was summer, and our tribe had tied their palas by the stream. Water was passing through the door of our house. The sound of its rolling at night, the brightness and clarity of the day, and its special coolness and purity that came from the springs of snow-filled of Tangal mountain, polished the soul of every person.

My father said loudly to my mother: "You have no right to feed a person who does not fast". My mother said "Hasan..." which was always my mother's call name for my father, "... It is not possible for me to not to feed a guest." Once, he advised my mother not to share us with a person who does not pray. The behavior of my parents and their attention to these issues had made us interested in religion without knowing the truth of religion and its principles and details of beliefs.

My brother Hussain had pasted many photos of players and singers in the same black storeroom of the house. My father tore them all one day. He said: "These are in front of the Qibla, in front when I do my prayer." My brother was upset and was also beaten thoroughly!

There was a lot of attention paid to pilgrimages (ziyareths) and Imamzadehs (descendants of Infallible Imams), as well as cooking food for offerings (nazr). Aash for rain was the most important of all. In our entire clan, the first sheep that gave birth to a lamb or male lamb belonged to Imam Hussain (peace be upon him). They closed it in the house for four to five months and fed it with grass. Their fattest sheep was also treated in the same manner. Then, during the migration season, they would recite the rouzeh of Imam Hussain

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(peace be upon him), sacrifice a sheep, and serve a heavy dinner. The same custom still prevails. But all their mourning for Imam Hussain (peace be upon him) was in the days of the migration season, i.e. the first month of autumn, when poor or rich, everyone did the same thing.

The shepherd and the owner of herd used to recite the rouzeh of Imam Hussain (peace be upon him). Sayyid Mahdi, the reciter of rouzeh, would recite for a whole month at noon and night in this and that person's house. A leg of mutton with two to five tumans was paid to him. The days of rouzeh were our happy days. We used to eat in full. The elders used to sit in front the gathering and we used to sit at the back of the gathering.

They used to serve tea. But my brothers and I, based to my father's advice, did not have the right to eat or drink anything that caused addiction. Therefore, tea and cigarettes were forbidden. And instead, we used to take sugar and ate sugar, which is the basis of tea. Later, we used to go to the house of one of our relatives to do some work. His kettle used to be on the fire. The smell of tea was mixed with clove⁵⁸. He said: "Uncle⁵⁹, do you drink tea?" I said: "Yes." I drank three strong cups of tea with large amounts of sugar, and I can still feel it's delicious taste in my mouth.

On Friday nights, I used to read the story of problem being solved⁶⁰ for our house members and other relatives and neighbors. After the

⁵⁸ Mikho is the clove: an evergreen and very aromatic plant with amazing medicinal properties.

⁵⁹ In Iran, the elders would call younger with the title they should be addressed. For example, a father would say to son, 'Papa', or uncle would address nephew, 'uncle'.

⁶⁰ They vowed to offer nazr to solve problems. When the problem was solved, they would gather some people on Friday night and bring nuts and tell the story of the

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end of the story, some people would bring raisins and some, who didn't have any, would bring candies⁶¹. We filled our pockets and enjoyed chewing candies.

The summer was ending and the tent houses were being packed to return to the clay domes⁶². Therefore, everyone recited the prayers one after the other. Our tribe moved to winter homes.

My mother had a headache that day. Whenever she had a headache, she sometimes felt fainted from the intensity of the pain. My sisters and I used to sit on my mother's bed and cry. I was always worried about losing my mother. As soon as my mother would have a headache, I would tremble. But that day, my mother's mood was different. She was saying something slowly to my father. Several times she repeated: "God is Gracious"

Although my father had a weak body, he was strong and fearless. One day, this fearlessness made him suffer: Habibullah Khan, the feudal chief came to village. It had snowed that day and village men were all sitting in the sunlight and talking to each other. We children also played in the snow. Habibullah Khan gave each of the village men a pipe of a few centimeters of opium⁶³. He did not give it to Mureed Muhammad who was already using it that day. My father laughed and read this poem: "The gift of the elders brings the nation

old man of Kharkani who appealed to Hazrat Ali (peace be upon him) to solve his problem and got an answer (means his problem was solved).

⁶¹ Mafreshu or Mafsho is a candy keeping cloth with beautiful patte embroidery patterns. It is also as a drug, nut and chocolate rug, and today it has even found use as a solid material and a mobile phone bag.

⁶² Clay domes are domed houses, made of clay, that is, baked molded mud.

⁶³ It should be known that one of the honorable hospitality among the old people, especially among villagers and nomads, is offering a little natural opium at special gatherings.

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to a place where they are not used⁶⁴." The feudal chief was upset and scolded my father.

In any case, it turned out that my older brother was pursuing the reason for my mother's worries and it was my father's loan to the rural cooperative bank. My father owed 900 tumans. For this reason, he went back and forth to feudal chief's house to somehow solve the problem. My father's debt worried me more than my mother. I cried many times because of the fear of my father being imprisoned.

Finally, my brother Hussain decided to go to the city⁶⁵ to work so that he might find money to pay my father's loan. He was taken over by my mother's crying. He went to city and returned after two weeks. He could not find anything. Now my fear had multiplied. I decided to go to the city and pay back this debt of my father at any cost. Both my parents were against it. I had just turned 14. That too, as I was also a weak child who had only seen Rabor until now.

I insisted a lot. With Ahmad⁶⁶ and Taj Ali⁶⁷, we were like three brothers. We left for the city by bus of Mahdipour⁶⁸, while I had a quilt, a large piece of cloth⁶⁹ full of bread and 5 Tumans in money. My

⁶⁴ It is like a proverb in this sense: God puts the elders of the country in a place where they are not useful. The gift of elders brings the nation to a place where it does not work.

⁶⁵ Kerman city.

⁶⁶ Ahmad Soleimani (1336 to 1363 S.H. (1957 – 1984)) was son of Martyr Qasem's uncle and became a martyr of Islam.

⁶⁷ Taj Ali Soleimani (1336-1360 S.H. (1957 – 1981)) was the inhabitant of Qanat-e Malek and was martyred for his country. His will can be found on internet.

⁶⁸ The family name of driver was Mahdipour and he passed away in the year 1398 S.H. (2019 A.D.)

⁶⁹ Called as 'Saruq', its piece of cloth used by nomads for carrying small things such as bread during travel or chores.

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mother joined me with one of our relatives and she very much requested him to take care of me.

The bus arrived in Kerman at night. For the first time, I saw such small cars (Volkswagen and Peykan). I was watching them when the bus stopped at the Bagh (Garden) square⁷⁰. Everyone got off except three of us. We got off together in a place of the square with the same quilts and handkerchiefs made of bread and cheese curds. We were watching the noise and mayhem of people, like wild people who were seeing humans for the first time!

We sat in the corner of the square. We were afraid of people who passed by and looked at us. We sat there and we didn't know where to go. Abdullah's house was the only address we had, but the two of them and I neither knew how to take a taxi nor did we know the address. Nowruz, whom my mother had sent us with and had come to the city several times, knew it. He stopped a small orange car that they called a taxi. He said: "Taxi, to Khaju."

Our taxi took four of us and drove towards Khaju. We were at the last point of Kerman city in less than a few minutes. We got out of the taxi and walked towards Abdullah's house according to the Nowruz's knowhow. I could hardly carry my bag. In any case, we arrived at Abdullah's house. Three or four other people from our town were there. Abdullah welcomed us well. Seeing Abdullah Saadi, we became very happy. It was as if I smelled the fragrance of my fellow citizens, the fragrance of my mother, my family, the fragrance of village, and I came out of homelessness.

⁷⁰ Also known as National Garden, or National Square

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Everyone believed that no one would give me and Taj Ali a job. Ahmad started working in the house of an engineer. At night, we satiated enough with bread and yogurt, and I started looking for work next morning. Alijan, who came earlier, was a good guide. I knocked on the doors of every shop, cafe, restaurant and workshop, and asked: "Don't you want workers?" Everyone took one look at my small height and thin body and rejected.

Finally, I entered a building under construction. A few teenagers and black⁷¹ youths like me, but smart and clever, were working. One was making cement with wheel barrow. The other one was carrying cement with wheel barrow. Another one was bringing bricks. Another teenager would lift them up at Ousta's command. Master Ali, whose name I learned from their calling each other, was Ousta Ali, looked at me and said, "What is your name?"

I said: "Qasem"

He asked: "How old are you?"

I said: "13 years"

He asked: "Aren't you studying?"

I replied: "I left it."

He asked: "Why?"

I answered: "My father has a loan to pay."

Tears gathered in my eyes. The sight of handcuffing my father came before my eyes. Tears flowed down my cheeks and I missed my mother too. I said: "Sir, give me a job!" Ousta, who had a merciful

⁷¹ Written as 'Siah Chordeh' in local language. Here, black means green, not black.

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heart, said: "Can you carry bricks?" I said: "Yes." He said: "I will give you two tumans a day, on the condition that you work." I became happy that I have found a job. Ousta raised her voice: "Come to work at 7 tomorrow morning." I said: "Tomorrow Ousta?" I remembered that the city people say "morning" tomorrow. I said, "Okay". Happy, I walked towards Abdullah's house, the resting place of our villagers. I told everyone about finding a job.

I left early in the next morning. I reached Ousta's place half an hour earlier. There was no one. After 20 minutes, another worker came. Little by little everyone came and finally Ousta was found. I started bringing bricks from the sidewalk into the building. My little hands couldn't even hold a brick! At any cost, I got busy. Towards evening, Ousta gave two tumans and said: "Come again in the morning."

For six days, I was working in front of the half-constructed building on Khaju Street, from after sunrise to near sunset. My thin body and young age could not bear such work. My little hands were bleeding. In the evening, after work, Ousta added twenty tumans and said: "This is your weekly wage."

Now I had about thirty tumans of money. I bought a small minu biscuit with two rials and I bought four bananas with five rials. I had a lot of fun. All the fatigue left my body. It was the first time that I ate a banana. I even learned to eat it from the young man who used to lift bricks from the hands of Ousta. I remembered the day when we were walking from Rabor to Dehman with Ahmad. The famous teacher of Rabor, Hussaini Nasab, was peeling apples with his friend. As he went, he dropped the apple skins on the ground. Ahmad and I used to collect the skins and eat them.

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I still have the taste of Gorji biscuits in my mouth, that were brought to our school in the carton for feeding students and the teacher distributed among us. Until now, no other sweets have tasted so much like those biscuits of that school day, in the world of childhood and hunger.

On Friday, together with Taj Ali, Alikhani and Abdullah, we went to Sarsabil Qanat to wash our clothes. A shirt and a tuman, my mother had accompanied with me in handkerchief. The atmosphere, which had clear and flowing water and irrigated a beautiful desert, reminded me of our beautiful village. First, we washed ourselves in water with laundry soap. Then, we put on new clothes and washed our clothes. My hands could not wash the clothes. I washed them anyway.

At night, at Abdullah's house, we cooked eggs and tomatoes and ate dinner. Abdullah believed that I cannot continue this work. I have to look for another job. I counted my money once. It was still far from 900 tumans. I remembered my mother and my brothers and sisters. I put my head under the quilt and cried. Crying, I fell asleep.

The call to prayer was loudly heard. I have been praying since childhood. Although I did not know many of its rules correctly. I remember the voice of my father's prayer, along with the supplication after prostration, which he kept whispering:

My God, by your great honor and your magnanimity, do not let me down

Don't make me ashamed for the crime of sin

I am ashamed in front of you

Don't embarrass me in front of anyone

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I prayed namaz. I remembered the pilgrimage of “Sayyid Khoshnam, Pir Khoshnam” in our village. I sought help from him and made a vow: If I get a good job, I will put a sugar candy inside his shrine.

In the morning, we walked together with Taj Ali and Abdullah. We reached out every shop, cafe, kebab shop, and every opened door and asked: “Don’t you want a worker, sir?” Everyone looked at two of us like two kid goats that have not been even fed milk, weak and without proper physical appearance! They said: “No.” A kebab shop owner said: “I want one of you, for 4 tumans a day.” Taj Ali joined him and I was left behind. It was hard for me to be separated from him in this city. We both looked at each other like two sons of Hazrat Muslim⁷². I was crying. Abdullah pulled my hand. I walked, looking back until the end of the street. I didn't want to lose his address. Taj Ali was crying. He called: “Qasem, friend...” I did not hear what he was saying.

The quest for job started again. And now, for three days, I visited every opened door from morning to night. I used to ask several times at some doors that I forgot.

I arrived in a street where there were a number of hotels and inns. I asked one by one. At first, they used to accept. After one hour, they would reject! I reached the end of the street. I climbed the stairs of a building. There was a lot of commotion. The smell of the food was so strong that I almost felt near it. The trays of food in the hand of a middle-aged man were moving rapidly. A fat man was sitting behind

⁷² Hazrat Muslim Ibn Aqeel was messenger of Imam Hussain (as) to the people Kufa where he went with his two small sons before the event of Karbala. They were all mercilessly martyred by the orders of governor of Kufa Ibn Ziyad.

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the table and counting money, a lot of money! I was lost watching the money and my dinner was done from the smell of food.

The fat man looked at me. "What are you doing?" he asked sharply.

I said in a sad voice: "Do you not want a worker?"

I was so sad that I started crying myself. The man's face changed. He said: "Come up."

I climbed up a few short steps. He looked at me kindly and asked:

"What is your name?"

I said: "Qasem"

He asked: "Your family name?"

I said: "Soleimani"

He asked: "Aren't you studying?"

I said: "Why not sir, but I want to work too."

The man called: "Muhammad, Muhammad, O Muhammad." A middle-aged man came and said, "Yes, Haji?" He said: "Bring some food for one person." A few minutes later, he brought a plate of rice with stew. It was the first time I saw it. Later I found out that it is called chelo khorsht sabzi⁷³. He said: "Leave it in front of this child." My nomadic nature and self-respect taught by my parents did not allow me to accept food for eating in this manner. I said: "No, sorry. I'm full", while I could not move because of hunger and fatigue. Haji, whom I later learned was Haj Muhammad, said with special affection: "My son,

⁷³ In many places in Iran, it is called as Qormeh Sabzi. Made of vegetable and meat and served with rice.

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eat.” I then took the bowl of food that I ate to the bottom and with Pepsi bottle that I saw in the city.

Haj Muhammad said: “You can work and sleep and eat here. I will give you 5 tumans a day. If you do a good job, I will increase your salary.” Lightning sparked from my eyes. I thanked the pilgrimage of “Sayyid Khoshnam, Pir Khoshnam” for solving my problem.

Haj Muhammad entrusted me to Muhammad. He was also from Jiroft⁷⁴. Muhammad took me into the kitchen. He was a very fat white cook. He gave me an angry look. He said sharply to Muhammad, “From where did you bring this child? Is it a child's play? I want a worker, not a child.”

My heart sank. I saw all my dreams being carried away by wind. The white meat man named Yousefi was quarrelling with Muhammad when another young man came, with an accent that was familiar to me. He said: “What is it, Mr. Yousefi?” Yousefi said sharply, “What have they brought?” He is not even tall enough to reach the pot. How is he going to help me?”

The young man, whose name incidentally was also Qasem, asked me, “Where are you from?” I said: “Rabor.” Go ahead. His eyes shined. He said: “From Rabor itself?” I said, “No, Kan Malek⁷⁵,” Qasem laughed and said, “I am a child of Javaran⁷⁶.” I wanted to cry from happiness! Javaran was a village near our clan, that had several shops, and my father generally traded with them. He gave fluff⁷⁷,

⁷⁴ Jiroft is a city and capital of Jiroft County, Kerman Province.

⁷⁵ Kan Malek is another and old name of Qanat-e Malek. In the local dialect, Kan means Qanat.

⁷⁶ Javaran or Marjan is a pleasant village 12 kilometers east of Rabor.

⁷⁷ Fluff is the fine soft wool of sheep, goats and camels, which gets stuck in the layer of comb teeth when combing their bodies.

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wool, cotton, curd, and oil, and bought other things. He asked, "Whose son are you?" I said: "Son of Mashdi Hasan". He knew my father well. My father was famous in Javaran. He said to Mr. Yousefi: "He is from my hometown." and silenced Yousefi.

Qasem became my most important supporter and protector. I moved my belongings from Abdullah's house to Kasra Hotel and started working there. I have been working for six months now. I missed my mother and my brothers and sisters. Yazdanpanah⁷⁸ had a son-in-law who was a clergyman and he came there from time to time. To earn more money, I also bought a juicer and started juicing on the sidewalk. On Fridays, we used to get together with Ahmad, Taj Ali and Alikhani.

The travelers who came there were surprised to see me and my young age. Some insisted on voluntarily paying for my education. Once two veiled women came. They were of relatively older age. In those days, there were few women with hijab. One of these ladies, because I was a child, used to speak to me. She said, "My son, what is your name?" I said, "Qasem." She said: "Qasmjan⁷⁹, will you come with me to help you study at school?" She insisted a lot. I said: "No!" I can study while working like this."

At night, slowly, I started counting my money. All the currency notes of 2 tumans, a lot of 2 Rials, 5 Rials and 10 Shahis. A total of 1250 tumans! I couldn't fit in my skin with happiness. After five months, I managed to send one thousand tumans to my father. Maybe it was my biggest victory and success until that day. I finally succeeded to pay my father's debt.

⁷⁸ The employer, Haj Muhammad

⁷⁹ Means 'Dear Qasem'

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It had been nine months since I arrived. Now I was no longer that weak black burnt teenager. With a fresh and exuberant appearance, I felt the vitality of youth in me. I bought a suit with Taj Ali. The cream color was very beautiful. The collection of clothes and shoes, together, did not reach one hundred tumans. I bought a beautiful red shirt for two tumans.

I missed my mother very much. Maybe during these nine months, I had cried dozens of times in her memory. I bought a suitcase full of souvenirs for all of them and the four of us (me, Ahmad, Taj Ali and Alikhan) bought tickets from the Autotaj garage and went to village in Mahdipour's car.

We had a very happy time. It had snowed heavily; everything was covered in white. I remembered last year when the snow was up to the belly of the sheep and I, without being afraid of the wolves that were lurking for sheep in the winter season, used to go to the forest of mountain almonds. In those days, my father bought a pair of rubber boot for me in winter.

The car broke down near Bezenjan⁸⁰. We walked for a while. On the way, we boarded jeep of a pehlawan⁸¹. We reached the village near sunset. Every one of our age and even the younger ones, Ahmad son of Khodakarem, Gholam Abbas and Ali Muhammadi came to see us. New and beautiful clothes and whitened face encouraged everyone to go to the city.

My mother and father were very happy. My mother sacrificed a chicken and prepared a sumptuous dinner. I divided the gifts among

⁸⁰ Bezenjan is a mountainous and historical city, 8 km from Central District of Baft County and 151 km from Kerman.

⁸¹ Probably refers to a traditional wrestler of zoorkhuneh.

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everyone, my two sisters who were very dear to me, I brought something for each of them.

I had also bought a Lubitel⁸² camera. I took a picture with my village friends. My father was very happy. He kept asking about my work, "Dad, is your work difficult?, Are your worker colleagues good with you?" My answer was 'yes'.

After ten days, all three of us returned back to city again. But this return was very different from the first trip. I was no longer afraid of the city. I did not feel isolated. Cars were not strange to me.

After returning, I started doing exercise: First I went to the pit of Zoorkhneh Ataei. Then, to the Zoorkhneh Jahan. God bless Mr. Ataei. He was there every evening. Although he had an athletic body, he did not exercise due to foot pain. There, everyone was older than me.

In the Zoorkhneh Jahan club, there was a strong athlete named Abbas Zangiabadi⁸³, who later became my friend after the revolution. He threw more than 50 stones⁸⁴ and went swimming for 100 times⁸⁵. I had another friend named Atta. He was a taxi driver. If he grabbed your wrist, you couldn't let it released from him. The first karate class in Kerman was established by the late Waziri. I was among the young people who entered. There were thirty of us. I passed the green belt.

⁸² Lubitel camera: the name of a Russian photographic camera, of the twin-lens reflex type, with a large opening from the top.

⁸³ He became close friend of Martyr Qasem Soleimani. He was martyred during imposed war on 21st April, 1985 in Hour al-Azeem warfront. He is buried in famous Zangiabadi graveyard in Kerman city.

⁸⁴ Means he lifted and lowered a heavy, flat board while lying on back.

⁸⁵ Refers to round of traditional exercise in Zoorkhneh.

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Between these two sports, I also worked on weightlifting and body building two days a week.

Little by little, I thought of renting a house. Along with Ahmad and Ali Muhammadi, who had joined me at the hotel, we rented a room from an old woman named Asieh on Naserieh Street of that day (presently Martyr Bahonar Street) for ten tumans a month.

Exercise and belief in the religious teachings in past, entrusted⁸⁶ by my parents, made me not go towards corruption despite the severity of corruption in the society. The words of Haj Muhammad and Agha Sayyid Mojtaba had a great impact on me.

The first time I heard a word against the Shah was in 1353 S.H. (1974). We were talking with Ali Yazdanpanah in the dining hall. It was the fourth of Aban 1353 (26th October 1974), the king's birthday. I was reading a poem in the newspaper that was written on the occasion of the crown prince's⁸⁷ birthday. I saw that he was upset. He said: "Do you know that all these corruptions are carried out by the orders of the head of this family?" I was upset and said: "Which corruptions?" Ali talked about the nakedness of women and centers of corruption. His words silenced me. At that time, the king was very valuable in my mind. These words were like a hammer on my thoughts!

I was confused for few days. Ali had chosen his path well. I believed in Haj Muhammad. He was a religious man. I went to him and narrated the words of his son Ali. He put his hand on his nose. He said seriously: "Hey! "Hey!" I was scared. I looked around. No one

⁸⁶ Here, divine trust is meant by the author.

⁸⁷ Muhammad Reza Pahlavi, son and crown prince and successor of Reza Khan.

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was there. I was surprised. Haj Muhammad tried to make me forget Ali's words by loving me more.

The next day, Haji called me again and asked, "Haven't you spoken to anyone about it?" I said: "No" and he gave me ten tumans as a tip. I said, "But I want to know if Ali is telling the truth? Is the king behind all these corruptions?" Haj Muhammad looked around. He said: "Dad, don't say anything for a while! SAVAK⁸⁸ will kill your father." I proudly said: "Who is SAVAK?!" Haj Muhammad's cry of "Hey! Hey!" was raised again.

I realized that I could not understand anything from Haj Muhammad. I became more friends with Ali. Recklessly, he started saying things that were unbelievable to me: about the Shah's wife, the Shah's sisters,... the words of Ali Yazdanpanah, the son of Haji, who was also chubby, made all my thoughts undergo an extraordinary duality.

I have been thinking about this for a long time. One night we were talking with Ahmad at home. Bahram Faraji, whose father was my father's cousin, was also there. I saw that Bahram used words similar to those of Ali Yazdanpanah. But not because of the king's corruption, but because of the king's cruelty: they kidnap people, imprison them and kill them. The king does not allow the rouzeh of Imam Hussain (peace be upon him) to be recited. I, who had grown up with Imam Hussain's rouzeh since I was a child and was waiting for the gatherings of rouzeh recitation from the beginning of year until Mehr Jan (festival at the beginning of autumn), the season of moving of nomads, said out loud: "He is doing wrong!" With this word, Bahram's

⁸⁸ SAVAK was secret police for domestic security and intelligence in Iran during the reign of the US puppet Pahlavi regime. It was established with the help of the CIA and Mossad in 1957 and it committed most brutal torture and massacre of innocent civilians during the time of tyrant Pahlavi regime.

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color turned white like chalk. He said confusedly, "Do you want them to catch us?"

It was the year 1354 S.H. (1976). Ahmad and I brought our two brothers, Sohrab and Mahmoud, who were the same age, to help our fathers. Now there were five of us in one room, which was a bedroom, a kitchen, a storage room, and everything. This was a room rented from Asieh Khanum. The old woman had no one. We also used to provide her with food. Of course, Ahmad paid more attention to the old woman than me. Another poor lady named Masoumeh lived with her orphaned child in the room next to ours. Ahmad also taught her son. Mahdi was always a guest at our table. At night, when we gathered together, we used to do wrestling. Ahmad and I were the same age and strength. Some nights we were together until midnight. Of course, we never had a conflict with each other.

It was the year 1355 S.H. (1976). Based on Ahmad's suggestion, I started visiting Qaim Mosque⁸⁹, where Mr. Haqiqi⁹⁰ was teaching the Qur'an and offered some translation and interpretation of the Qur'an. From Qaim Masjid, I used to go to Tekeyeh⁹¹ Fatimiyyeh. I used to participate in the public recitation of ziyarate Ashura with hundreds of curses and hundreds of salams⁹², that was recited by Atta Khan, official reciter of Tekeyeh. During these years, a cleric named

⁸⁹ The Qaim Mosque in Kerman was built on Motahari Street, Qaim Square.

⁹⁰ Ayatullah Abbas Haqiqi (1300 to 1386 (1921-2007 AD)) was one of the prominent religious scholars, a teacher of the Howzeh and preacher of Tafsir, and the Imam of the Qaim Mosque and Jameh Mosque in Kerman.

⁹¹ Tekeyeh is a place for holding religious ceremonies, mourning and ta'zieh.

⁹² At the end of the Ziyarate Ashura, there is a curse and a greeting that they recommend to read each hundred times. Some people strictly follow it.

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Mahmoudi used to preach in the Imam Mosque⁹³, which was known as Malek Mosque. A large crowd used to attend his speech in the mosque. His speeches were very sweet and pleasant. He used to mention accurate address for each verse of Qur'an he recited: so-and-so surah, so-and-so chapter, so-and-so verse. I was greatly influenced by his words. Slowly, the spirituality and strong religious feelings were gradually taking their shape within me.

In the summer of 1355 S.H. (1976), the Garden party⁹⁴ was brought to Kerman. It is noteworthy that the Shah had established corruption centers in all provincial centers to mislead the youth. But none of these centers could be established in Kerman. That day, all the famous singers and dancers (Aghasi, Hamira, Haideh, Azita) had come to an open field at the end of Abu Hamid Street, which was known as Samsam Street⁹⁵ at that time. They had set up a huge tent. People went there to watch and singers and dancers performed for them.

With my friend Fath Ali, who was from Javaran, and Ali Yazdanpanah, we decided to confront and sabotage. At night, when everyone was watching the programs at the Garden Party, we pulled out 150 car tires and punctured them all and quietly ran away! When we were teenagers, we did this kind of fight against corruption with pride and we were not afraid of anyone. Of course, I didn't have any precise knowledge of SAVAK yet. I only heard and felt the name of

⁹³ Malek Mosque or Imam Mosque is about a thousand years old and has an area of about 10,000 meters! This spectacular mosque in Kerman has many congregation halls, various altars (mihabs) and a wide courtyard.

⁹⁴ A garden party is a celebration planned in an open space or a garden, which is usually held for national and political occasions.

⁹⁵ Samsam Street is now called Palestine Street.

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SAVAK and fear of SAVAK many times from the words of Haj Muhammad. But I was not afraid of anything.

It was summer. My friend, Hassan, had a heavy 750 engine⁹⁶ truck. We used to ride on his truck⁹⁷ and he would go crazy around the streets. Youthful pride, along with expertise in karate techniques and strong muscular arms had put some wind in my head to argue and fight.

I left the hotel work in 1353 S.H. (1974). I was looking for a more specialized job. I met two young ceramicists from Tehran who were inhabitants of Naziabad⁹⁸. Both were strongly religious and anti-king.

They insisted that I work with them. I worked with them for six months. Little by little, I found out that they are members of the Mujahidin Khalq Organization⁹⁹. They insisted on taking me with them. Their good manners impressed me a lot. But in the meantime, I got Malta fever¹⁰⁰. I had to be treated in Raziah Firouz Hospital¹⁰¹ for two weeks. During this time, they returned to Tehran.

⁹⁶ 750 engine means Honda engine model 750CB.

⁹⁷ On a seat behind the truck driver.

⁹⁸ Naziabad is a neighborhood in the south of Tehran.

⁹⁹ The Mujahidin Khalq Organization (MKO) was one of the extremist groups that tried to overthrow the Pahlavi regime's imperial system with a Marxist approach. But when they saw the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, they used sabotage tactics against Islamic government with the support of Saddam and Western powers. They killed over 17,000 innocent people in Iran. Since then, MKO has become the most hated terrorist organization in the world because of their treachery and heinous crimes. Their base is now in Albania and fully supported by USA, Zionist regime and the European Union.

¹⁰⁰ Malta fever (Brucellosis) is an infectious disease transmitted from animals to humans, often by consuming unpasteurized dairy products.

¹⁰¹ Raziah Firouz Hospital is the first private hospital in Kerman, which is still operating with the same name, on Mutahari Street and near the Imam Mosque.

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After being discharged from the hospital, with the help of a person named Shafiei, who was the general director of water organization in Kerman province, I went to the water organization and worked in the meter reading department.

It was the year 1355 S.H. (1976). I used to go back and forth to the Jameh Mosque¹⁰², where Ayatullah Salehi¹⁰³ was leading prayers there at that time, and the Qaim Mosque, where Mr. Haqiqi gave Qur'an lessons and Tekeyeh Fatimiyeh, which was almost my constant hangout¹⁰⁴. At the end of 1355 S.H. (February, 1977), a cleric named Sayyid Reza Kamyab¹⁰⁵ came to Kerman and started holding gatherings in Qaim Mosque. Few people attended his meetings. His meetings were limited. I didn't understand anything from his words, because he spoke very covertly, I only knew that he was against the king. I attended his three sessions.

I experienced the first conflict with the police in the Muharram of 1355 S.H. (December, 1976). It was the Day of Ashura, when as usual, we

¹⁰² Kerman Jameh Mosque or Mozaffari Jameh Mosque, with an age of about seven hundred and fifty years, is located next to Shahada Square (former Mushtaqiyeh).

¹⁰³ Ayatullah Ali Asghar Salehi Kermani (1275 to 1360 S.H. (1896 - 1982)) was a revolutionary preacher and seminary scholar and the revivalist of the Masoumeh seminary in Kerman. His grave is in the courtyard of Holy shrine of Hazrat Masoumeh (sa) in Qom.

¹⁰⁴ Permissible hangout place for many people to gather and have meetings.

¹⁰⁵ Hojjat-ul-Islam Sayyid Reza Kamyab (1329 to 1360 S.H. (1950 – 1982)) studied at Mashhad Seminary and was a revolutionary comrade of the Supreme Leader Sayyid Ali Khamenei (ha) and Martyr Sayyid Abdul Karim Hasheminejad. Passionate speeches in Mashhad and Kerman, Yazd, were effective in the progress of the revolution. He was a parliamentarian for one term and was martyred by assassination.

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went to Imamzadeh Sayyid Hussain in Jopar¹⁰⁶ at this time every year. I stayed home that day. I had come to Kasra Hotel to visit my friend Fath Ali. It was hot and both of us were looking down from the window of the building. On the other side of the street, in front of us, was the municipality of Kerman. A young girl with bare head and long hair was walking on the sidewalk, which was a normal thing in those days. On the sidewalk, a police constable insulted her. This ugly act of his on the Day of Ashura made me upset. Regardless of the consequences, I decided to deal with him.

The police constable walked towards his friend, who was also a police constable and was stationed at the crossroad next to the police station. I quickly went down the stairs of the hotel with my friend. I was so angry that the consequences of my attack did not matter to me. Two policemen started talking to each other. I reached them in a flash. I knocked him down with a few karate kicks. Blood gushed from his nose!

The traffic police whistled¹⁰⁷. Because it was near the police station, two constables ran towards us. I ran away with the same speed and took refuge in the hotel building. I lay down to hide under one of the beds. A large number of constables rushed to the hotel. They searched everywhere for almost two hours; But they could not find me. Then, I left the hotel and headed towards our house. The beating of the police constable made me proud. Now I was no longer afraid of anything.

¹⁰⁶ Jopar is a summer town in the central part of Kerman city, 25 kilometers away from the center of the Kerman province.

¹⁰⁷ In the old days, policemen and agents used to whistle to warn or call their colleagues.

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At the beginning of 1356 S.H. (March, 1977), for the first time, I went to visit the Holy Mashhad by bus. After nearly twenty hours, the bus arrived in Mashhad. I got a room in an inn near the shrine. After the pilgrimage, I was looking for a sports club. I saw a Zoorkhneh near the shrine. Now, I used to do exercise with clubs¹⁰⁸, and with kobadeh¹⁰⁹ and went to swimming more than 70 times. Some middle-aged men and some young men were doing sports. My bare arms and broad chest at a young age indicated that I was an athlete. A handsome young man whom others called Mr. Sayyid Javad complimented me. I entered the pit¹¹⁰ with a sports long¹¹¹. I got permission from Miandar¹¹², I went for a few swims¹¹³. Then I came and lifted heavy board¹¹⁴. It was clear from Sayyid Javad's eyes that I had caught his attention. After finishing the exercise and being allowed to go out by Miandar, I left the pit.

I had learned very well the principles of entering and leaving the pit from the late Ataei and Haj MashaAllah Jahani, which is the ultimate in sportsmanship. Basically, sports had a great impact on my religious ethics, and one of the most important factors that prevented me from being drawn into moral corruption, despite being young, was sports.

¹⁰⁸ Meel gereftan: Picking up and swinging two large club-like heavy sticks, above the shoulders and behind the shoulders.

¹⁰⁹ Kobadeh zadan: Lifting and turning left and right a metal and chain bow, above the head.

¹¹⁰ The specific place where the members of Zoorkhneh do exercise. The place is made lower than the ground level so that the sense of humility in the wrestlers remains alive.

¹¹¹ Long: The main clothing of Zoorkhneh members is red cotton or silk fabric with black lines.

¹¹² The oldest Zoorkhneh wrestler who is expert in the moves and secrets of the ancient sport. He stands in the middle of the pit and directs the group.

¹¹³ Round of exercise in Zoorkhneh.

¹¹⁴ Rocking or Stoning: Lifting and lowering a heavy, flat board while lying on back.

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Especially the ancient sport¹¹⁵ that has inherent moral and religious foundations and principles.

Sayyid Javad, a young man from Mashhad, asked me: “Where are you from?”

I said: “I am from Kerman.”

He asked my name. I told him. He asked: “How many days are you in Mashhad?” I said: “One week”, and then he insisted that I go to their sports club every evening during this one week.

The holy shrine of Imam Reza, peace be upon him, had a strange attraction for me. I was in the shrine until late at night. The next day, I went to the sports club of Sayyid Javad at 4 pm. This time another young man came with Sayyid Javad whom he called Hasan. After exercise in pit of Zoorkhneh, Sayyid Javad and his friend Hassan took me to a corner. I imagined that they wanted to hit someone and so for this reason they planned to be friends with me.

Their bodies were not athletic. But they ate well and went for swimming. It was clear that Hasan had very recently joined the Zoorkhneh. Because when he went for twenty swims, he used to sleep on the board. The three of us sat on one of the sports tables. Sayyid Javad asked me: “Have you ever heard the name of Dr. Ali Shariati?” I said: “No, who is he?” Sayyid, unlike Haj Muhammad, explained without fear: “Shariati is a teacher and has written several books.” He is anti-Shah.” And from now, the word “against the king”

¹¹⁵ The ancient sports in the traditional Iranian gymnasiums have wisdom, manners, and behavioral and spiritual principles and practices that one is amazed to know them. Together with physical strength, it also builds human character and spirituality.

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was no longer surprising to me. Apparently, it made me feel more flexible.

This time his friend Hassan spoke. He asked: "Do you know Ayatullah Khomeini?" I said, "No." He said, "Who are you imitating?"¹¹⁶ I asked: "Who is an imitator?" And they both looked at each other in surprise. They gave up their question. They asked again: "Have you ever heard the name of Khomeini?" I said, "No." Then, Sayyid and his friend gave me a detailed explanation about a man whom they introduced as Ayatullah Khomeini.

Then, he took a deep look around and pulled out a photo from under his shirt. He placed the photo in front of my eyes. A picture of a middle-aged spiritual man with glasses on his eyes, who was reading, and under it was written "Grand Ayatullah Sayyid Ruhollah Khomeini." He asked me, "Do you want me to give you this picture?" I quickly answered, "Yes, I want it." Sayyid Javad's friend Hasan said, "No one should see this photo, otherwise SAVAK (which was by now a familiar name to me) will arrest you."

I took the photo and hid it under my shirt. I said goodbye and left them. "Shariati" and "Khomeini" were two new names that I heard. I was wondering how those two young ceramicists from Tehran, during those six months that I worked with them and were close friends, and they all talked to me against the Shah, did not mention the names of these two persons!

I entered the inn. I took out the photo from under my shirt. I looked at him (the person in photo, Ayatullah Khomeini) for hours. I didn't go to

¹¹⁶ Imitation (taqlid) here means following a mujtahid (a Shiite jurisprudent scholar) in religious practices. Every Shia who reaches the age of puberty finds a reference for the comprehensive imitation of the religious practices for him.

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the gym anymore. On the fourth day, I went to the passenger terminal and bought a ticket to Kerman. This was in a state that I had hidden the black and white photo and I had now fallen in love with it while it was under my shirt that was attached to my heart. I felt like I was carrying a very valuable thing with me.

As soon as I arrived in Kerman, I showed the photo to Ali Yazdanpanah. He said: "This is Mr. Khomeini's photo." He asked with surprise, "Where did you get it from? If they catch you with this photo, they will kill your father or kill you." I now felt a strange courage within me. I assumed SAVAK to be my karate opponent that I would quickly knock him down! I was so much full of youthful exuberance that I was not afraid of anything. Now I was like a top class revolutionary, more forceful than Ali Yazdanpanah and I spoke as a bold person without fear of anyone.

In 1356 S.H. (1977), little by little, noises were heard from outside Kerman. Almost everyone was aware of the clashes in Qom and Tabriz. In the middle of 1356 (August, 1977), a number of prisoners in Kerman were released, including one Mr. Hojjati¹¹⁷ and two Masharzadehs¹¹⁸, who were two brothers, and one of the Masharzadehs was the central member of the Mujahidin Khalq Organization.

¹¹⁷ Hojjat-ul-Islam Mohammad Javad Hojjati Kermani, born in 1311 S.H. (1932), was the first Friday prayer Imam of Kerman and a representative of the Majlis and Majlis of Experts for several terms. He is currently one of Friday prayer Imams of Tehran.

¹¹⁸ Mohammadreza Masharzadeh Mehrabi was an active, good-natured and popular teacher. GholamHussain Masharzadeh joined the hypocrites (MKO) and eventually chose evil path for himself.

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Kerman was in a fluctuating situation. In the peaceful city of Kerman, the loud voices of hundreds of people protesting against the king could be heard every day. And, now all six of us were revolutionaries, anti-shah and supporters of Khomeini: Ahmad, Ali, me, Bahram and two brothers Sohrab and Mahmoud, who were teenagers.

Due to my lack of experience and youthful exuberance and sportsmanship and nomadic bravery that was inherent in me, I spoke recklessly and spoke ill of the king and his family. From night to morning, a brother named Vaezi (who in the beginning of revolution entered the IRGC, I don't know what happened later), Ahmad and some of the youths of Kerman used to write slogans on the walls. The main slogans were "Death to the Shah" and "Hail to Khomeini". Khomeini's photo was my daily mirror. I looked at his photo several times a day. It was as if he was alive next to me and I was sitting next to him who is reading the Qur'an. He had become a part of me.

It was the end of 1356 S.H. (February, 1978). For a long time, I was appearing in the test for getting a driver's license and now I passed it. I went to the traffic center to get my license. There was an officer named Azari Nasab. He said: "Come on. By the way, Khomeini has signed your license! It is ready for delivery." I did not understand much of his sarcasm. They led me into the room. Two other ranked officers also entered the room and started cursing obscenities at me.

I was surrounded by them and there was no escape. They slapped and kicked and were saying in something that cannot be described: "You go to write on the walls at night?" They hit me so hard that I fell on the ground. Blood was flowing from my nose and face. One of them stood on my stomach with a boot and hit my stomach so hard that I felt that all my internal organs were destroyed. Despite being an

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athlete and going through hard training I did in karate and Zoorkhneh, my strength ran out and I became unconscious.

When I woke up, the door of the room was closed and I was locked in it. Because the traffic information and guidance office was in the same place and in front of the hotel where I used to work, they knew me well and they knew me as "Student of Haj Muhammad". One of the ranked officers who knew Haj Muhammad and Haji Karnama, who sold spare parts and knew me well, informed me.

From inside the room, I could hear the voices of Haj Muhammad and Haji Karnama saying to the intelligence officer: "He is a simple and unfortunate worker." He doesn't know these things at all!" And they insulted me a few times: "Suppose he made a mistake. Is it out of ignorance!" After half a day, they took me out of police intelligence office without handing me over to SAVAK.

With my body completely crushed, they held my hands tightly so that I could cross the street. They took me to Haj Muhammad's hotel. They brought drink. I felt a little better. Haj Muhammad kissed me. He addressed me with the word "my son". He whispered me a lot in my ear: "If you get caught by them again, they won't have mercy on you." He insisted that I return to him. I thanked and left the hotel and went to the house where there were five of us.

I could not even move for three days because of the severity of pain. But then I felt a new energy within me. The fear of being beaten and tortured had completely gone. I thought that everything that must happen has already happened! This incident affected me in a way that it was like a tattoo that we used to make small moles on the back of our hands with mint leaves. With every blow and kick, the word

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“Khomeini” was engraved deep within my being. It was an opportunity.

I had opportunity together with Ahmad to visit village again. Nowruz of 1357 S.H. (March 1978) was near. I stayed in the village for a while. Although I had a week's leave from the water organization, I was no longer in the mood to work. I stayed for 10 days. My parents were happy that I was a “government employee”. Of course, they did not know much about the difference between an employee and a worker. That I was one of the few individuals of the village who were paid by the government, was very important.

But there was another commotion in my heart. Now the BBC radio was familiar to every anti-royal revolutionary. We listened to the BBC radio every night together with my older brother, who was now more fanatical than me in religious matters. Although the BBC reported the daily events of the cities and Tehran with a certain magnification and exaggeration, the power of the Shah's regime was still strong. The young people of my age, without exception, except for a few who belonged to feudal chief of village, who were generally of the lower classes, all had a revolutionary spirit. Our village was totally revolutionary. My parents did not have such detailed information about our situation.

I returned back to Kerman. The enthusiasm of the revolution in the city was now more than before. I returned to the water organization for a month. But then I didn't feel like going to the organization anymore. We rented a room in a house owned by another tenant together with Ahmad and our two brothers: four of us in one room, which was our bedroom, storage room, kitchen and everything.

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We had the guests from the city who were the daily guests of our simple meals, which was usually yogurt bread or eggs or bread and halwah. Sometimes, we would treat them with our mother's gifts, that was either pasta or some qorma and nuts. In the yard of our rented house, a family with several children, mostly little girls, rented another room. Their little children shared our bread and yogurt at noon. We generously offered them food. Of course, Ahmad was more generous than me, and offered from our share with the same bowl of yogurt in which the bread pieces¹¹⁹ were mixed. Sometimes, when we couldn't get enough ourselves, we used to apply yogurt on their lips and faces! Their mother used to come and pray for us and thank us for feeding her kids.

Now my hangout was moved from Fatimiyeh Tekeyeh to Jameh Mosque. Most of the time I was generally in the Jameh Mosque. The sports club was not left also. These days, I used to go to Haj MashaAllah most of the time at the Jahan Sports Club. I also found new friends like Ataei and Haj Abbas Zangiabadi. Of course, I used to previously see Haj Abbas there. His big body, that used to hold heavy clubs, fascinated everyone. Sometimes I used to visit Ataei's sports club, where Ataei himself, the owner of the club, was considered one of Kerman's wrestlers. Courtesy and respect for elders and sports made me respected by both of them, that is, Haj MashaAllah and Ataei.

Little by little, demonstrations took place in the city. Imam's name and his identification were no longer limited to a few people. A lot of people knew him and were eager to have him back in the country. The number of revolutionaries in Kerman was so great that it can be said that Kerman had a central role in the revolution. Hashemi

¹¹⁹ Small pieces of bread were mixed in liquid soup, milk, curry, yogurt, etc.

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Rafsanjani, whom I didn't know at the time, Bahonar¹²⁰, Hojjati, Fahim Kermani, Masharzadeh, Mohadiha, Saveh, Jafari, most of Kerman's religious scholars, except for a few, were united against the Shah.

Now Jameh Mosque and Malek Mosque were the main gathering places of the revolutionaries. Before that, Qaim Mosque was like this due to the presence of Ayatullah Haqiqi. But now Jameh Mosque was the main center of movements due to prayer leadership and central position of Ayatullah Salehi. He was a spiritual person, a short, old man who was getting old, but was highly respected and cared for by the people of Kerman. In the afternoons, everyone would gather. The news were exchanged in an unorganized way. From Tehran to Qom and Shiraz, everyone knew about all over the country and shared the news with each other.

The first anti-regime demonstrations of Kerman, in which religious scholars were in the first line, began. Ayatullah Najafi, who was Imam of the prayers in Imam Zaman Mosque was in the front and the rest of the scholars accompanied him and the people were following behind the scholars. The slogans were initially about political prisoners and their freedom. Little by little, it took on an anti-Shah color. But similar to a small flame that turns into heavy flames, the cry of "Death to the Shah" spread throughout the city.

The army, that had the training center # 5 at that time and I had been there several times during my brother's compulsory military service, the military guards, police, intelligence, and the SAVAK were all active. But the anti-regime wave was much bigger than their strength.

¹²⁰ Martyr Hojjat-ul-Islam Dr. Mohammad Javad Bahonar, a great scholar and educationist. He was the prime minister of I.R. Iran with then President Muhammad Ali Rijaei. Both were martyred in MKO planted bomb blast on 30th August 1981.

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Taking one or two individuals or a few or even a thousand people would not affect this wave. At all, these numbers were not something that they wanted to affect; this very heavy and deep-rooted crashing wave.

My friends and I, who were now joined by Ali Jan and Abdullah, were talking freely. In the morning, a rally was announced in the Jameh Mosque of the city. This word-of-mouth announcement filled the whole city more than today's virtual space! Revolutionary youths and a number of scholars, including Ayatullah Salehi, gathered in Shabestan¹²¹ of mosque. City Police, by gathering gypsies¹²² who lived in the vicinity of the city, attacked the mosque from two sides. Jameh Mosque had three very large and similar entrance doors.

I had recently bought a yellow colored Suzuki 125 motorcycle. I entered through the entrance of the Kerman market and parked my motorcycle in one of the side streets branching off from the market. Inside of the mosque was lively with revolutionary fervor. After a few hours, the gypsies started their attack from the north and west doors of the mosque, with the support of the city police forces and constables. First, they set fire to all the motorbikes and bicycles parked in front of the mosque. The youth shouted, "Close the doors!"

Together with Vaezi and Ahmad, I went to the roof of the mosque's main hall. Gypsies and constables were brutally burning people's belongings. Then they brought some motorbikes behind the door of the mosque and set the door on fire. Tear gas was fired into the

¹²¹ Large halls in mosque of religious gatherings.

¹²² Kooliha: Gypsies (Roma, Ghorbti, Guron, Qarachi), a mysterious race migrated centuries ago from India to Iran and other lands. Their lives are strange, homeless, isolated, begging, famous for fortune-telling, dancing, black games, and so on.

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mosque from both sides. Then the door was forced opened and the attack inside the main hall began.

We moved Ayatullah Salehi out of the window of main hall of the Mosque. He was completely exhausted due to gas inhalation and old age. A courageous fighting cleric whom I later became friends with, named Asadi, enthusiastically encouraged the youth to fight back. People were also fleeing from the west door of the mosque, and anyone who wanted to leave the door would get his head and hands broken by the sticks and clubs of the gypsies.

In the middle of the ongoing fighting and clashes, I saw a fearful child crying in terror. I screamed unconsciously and turned to the policeman who had attacked him. I said: "Let him go!" As I uttered this word so strongly, I felt that he hesitated and was afraid for a moment. I carried the child and left through the west door. I turned to the sidewalk. The motorcycle was intact. We rode the motorcycle with Ahmad. A group of constables came in front of us. When we tried to pass by them, ten to fifteen batons hit our heads and faces.

Now the clashes were going on in front of Muhammad Reza Shah Street¹²³. We attacked the constables with stones. The constables set fire to the building of Uqabi brothers, which was having a car exhibition that day, and one of them had a motorbike and bicycle shop. Uqabiyani was one of the major wealthy property owners of Kerman and was against the king. The fighting lasted until the night. In any case, the demonstration was finally dispersed.

Two days later, together with Vaezi and Fath Ali, who was one of the youths of our village, and some of the youths of the city, we set fire to

¹²³ Presently, Taleqani Street in Kerman city.

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the only liquor store in the city of Kerman on Kazemi street¹²⁴. This new action was completely out of the control of the regime-affiliated forces. The news of burning of Kerman Grand Mosque spread throughout the country and led to numerous demonstrations. A very heavy demonstration took place in the city of Kerman. People chanted: "The Shah burned the Kerman Mosque, the book of the Qur'an, and the Muslim people."

Jameh Mosque was my fixed hangout. I could not remember when I used to have lunch and dinner. I no longer went to the water organization. In the name of strike, I refused to go to work. Inside the mosque, a number of young people began chanting: "We do not live under the burden of oppression. We sacrifice our lives for freedom. We are turning the Pahlavi dynasty upside down... death to the king, death to the king... O traitorous king, you are displaced. You destroyed the homeland."

In our village, our family and dear Mashhadi and Ahmad's father had become anti-Shah. My elder brother used to listen to BBC every night. On the Day of Ashura of 1357 (December, 1978), the Gendarmerie of "Rabor Police Station" along with Feudal Chief of village, gathered in front of our house with musical instruments and beating drums while singing "Javid Shah (long live Shah)" and tried to send an indirect message to my father that: "You are in danger!" My elder brother, Hussain, got a serious mental problem and was shocked that they had done this on the Day of Ashura. He kept repeating that "they did this on the Day of Ashura" and kept his eyes on the ground and cried. Everyone thought he was out of his senses.

¹²⁴ Presently, Quds Street.

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I returned to our village. My brother's situation worried me. I talked to him about the revolution and that the Shah is falling and gave him the news of other cities. I was with him for three days. I took him out of the house. I used to give him the news and talked constantly. From the third day, he was back to normal. I advised him not to listen to BBC news for now.

I returned to Kerman again. My mother was worried. She also came to Kerman. She was worried that my younger brother would be killed. She made me swear not to get into a fight. By the way, my mother's presence coincided with the height of the revolution. Ahmad Tavakoli¹²⁵ was martyred.

I was looking for a weapon. First, I bought a mock (dummy) handgun which was of no use. Then I tried to disarm a constable who was friends with one of my friends. I had seen him before. He had a Colt¹²⁶ revolver on his waist. I felt that I can overpower him. Because of sports, youthful pride, and fearlessness that the revolution had given us, I no longer felt any fear in myself to fight with the police. With my friend Fath Ali, we made a plan to disarm him. We decided to invite him to the hotel. With a blow to his head, we would knock him unconscious and take away his gun. In any case, this was not possible.

¹²⁵ Apparently, it was Hasan Tavakoli. The author writes about the burial of his body a few lines ahead.

¹²⁶ Colt is actually Colt M 1911 (1911 colt), made by the American company Colt. In this semi-automatic pistol, the bullets are placed in a magazine in the handle of the weapon. In Iran, the term colt was gradually used for all types of pistols. Revolver is a French word (revolver) that generally means seven-shot or six-barreled. In this waist weapon, 5 or 6 or 7 cartridges are placed in separate circular tubes. With each shot, these cylindrical tubes rotate and the next shot is ready to be fired.

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Three months later, someone from Ravar¹²⁷ brought me a Colt revolver with the Shahnshahi logo for five thousand tumans. I did not need any training. It was like the same mock Colt¹²⁸ I had.

After the funeral of Hasan Tavakoli, we held his ceremony in Malek Mosque (presently, Imam Khomeini Mosque). There was a large crowd. Police forces with a large number of people from Kerman, who were said to be from Baghin¹²⁹, were roaming with show of their power on the street and seemed to be moving towards the mosque. I passed the news to the mosque.

When their column turned towards the mosque, I saw a brick truck. With my friend Hassan, we attacked them with bricks. Therefore, the conflict started before they reached the mosque. The police arrived. First, he shot a warning bullet. Later, he started shooting live rounds. When he shot, everyone shouted: "Mashkhiyeh! Mashkhiyeh!"¹³⁰ Little by little, live bullets were fired on the protestors. Moments later, three persons fell to the ground: Shaheed Dadbin, Namju... who were martyred in the end. We had a fight with the police in the streets and alleys around the mosque until one o'clock in the morning.

Endless

¹²⁷ The northernmost city of Kerman province is Ravar (Rahor), which is 140 km away from Kerman. Ravar is a city in the heart of the desert, near one of the extremely hot spots on earth, namely, the region of Briyan wheat.

¹²⁸ Training (Mashakhi) Colt is an unreal weapon in which the gunpowder explodes, but there is no real bullet.

¹²⁹ Baghin is one of the old settlements near the city of Kerman and is the crossroads of the Yazd-Kerman and Yazd-Bandar Abbas roads.

¹³⁰ Means 'It's a warning shot'

Letter of Martyr Qasem Soleimani to his daughter

In the name of God, the beneficent, the merciful

Is this going to be my last journey or my fate is something else, whatever it is, I am satisfied with it. I am writing for you on this trip so that it will be a reminder for you in your longings without me. Maybe you will find something useful in it.

Every time I start the journey, I feel like I won't see you again. Many times, along the way, I have visualized your faces full of love one by one in front of my eyes and many times I have shed tears in your memory. I miss you, I left you to God. Although I have had less opportunity to express my love and I could not convey my inner love to you. But my dear, have you ever seen someone look in front of his mirror and say I love you to his eyes, it rarely happens, but his eyes are the most precious to him. You are my eyes. Whether I say it or not, you are dear to me.

I have always been worried about you for more than twenty years and God has blessed that this life will not end and you will always dream of fear. My daughter, whatever I think and do in this world that I could do something else to worry you less, I saw that I could not and it was not and is not because of my interest in military service. It was not and will not be because of the job. It was not and is not due to coercion or insistence of anyone. No, my daughter, I am never willing to worry you even for a moment because of work, responsibility, insistence or compulsion, let alone exclude you or make you cry.

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I saw that everyone in this world has chosen a path for himself, one acquires knowledge and one imparts knowledge. One trades, the other cultivates, and there are millions of ways, or better to say, there is one way for every human being, and everyone has chosen a way for himself. I saw what path I should choose. I thought to myself and reviewed a few issues and asked myself, firstly, how long is this road, where is the end of it, how much time do I have. And basically, what is my aim. I saw that I am temporary and everyone is temporary. They stay for a few days and leave. Some a few years, some ten years, but few reach a hundred years. But everyone leaves and everyone is temporary. I saw that if I do business, the result is going to be some shiny coins and some houses and some cars. But they have no influence on my fate in this journey. I thought that I would live for you, I saw that you are very important and precious to me, so that if pain comes to you, pain will take over my whole being. If something happens to you, I will find myself in the midst of flames. If you leave me one day, the shackles of my being will collapse.

But I saw how I can solve my fears and worries. I saw that I must connect with someone who can cure me of this problem and he is none other than God.

This value and treasure that you are the flowers of my existence cannot be preserved with wealth and power. Otherwise, the rich and powerful should have prevented themselves from dying, or their wealth and power should prevent their incurable diseases and prevent them from becoming bedridden. I have chosen God and His way.

This is the first time I admit this sentence: I never wanted to be a soldier, I never liked being graded. I do not prefer the beautiful words

LETTER OF MARTYR QASEM SOLEIMANI TO HIS DAUGHTER

of Qasem, which came from the pure mouth of Basiji¹³¹ Pashdar¹³² Shaheed, to any office. I wanted and still want to be Qasem without suffix or prefix. Therefore, I have written in my will to write on my grave only 'Qasem soldier', and not Qasem Soleimani, who is a bigot and makes the burden of saddlebag heavy¹³³.

My dear, I asked God to fill all the arteries of my being and all my capillaries with His love. Fill me with His love. I didn't choose this way to kill people, you know I can't even see cutting off a chicken's head. If I have taken up arms, it is to stand against murderers, not to kill people. I see myself as a soldier in the home of every Muslim who is in danger, and I would like God to give me the strength to defend all the oppressed in the world. Not to give my life for dear Islam as my life is not worthy of it, not for the oppressed Shia, as it is more impossible for me, no, no... but I should fight for that frightened and homeless child who has no shelter, for that woman clinging child to her chest in fear, and for that displaced person running away and being chased, who has left a trail of blood behind him.

My dear, I belong to that army that does not sleep and should not sleep. So that others may sleep in peace. Let my peace sacrifice for their peace and let them sleep. My dear daughter, you live safely and with honor in my house. What should I do for that helpless girl who has nothing to cry out for and that crying child who has nothing and has lost everything?

¹³¹ Volunteer force established by the order of Imam Khomeini (ra).

¹³² Member of IRGC.

¹³³ It's an utmost expression of Martyr Soleimani's humbleness.

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So you make me your nazr¹³⁴ and leave it to Him¹³⁵. Let me go, go and go. How can I stay when all my caravan is gone and I am left behind?

My daughter, I am very tired. I haven't slept in thirty years, but I don't want to sleep anymore. I pour salt in my eyes so that my eyelids don't dare to come together so that they don't behead that helpless child in my negligence. What do you expect from me when I think that the fearful girl is you, is Narjes, is Zainab, and that young man lying in the slaughterhouse who is being beheaded is my Hussain and my Reza? To be a spectator, to be indifferent, to be a businessman? No, I can't live like this.

Peace be upon you and God's mercy

¹³⁴ Your offering to God.

¹³⁵ Refers to God.

Ayatullah Khamenei's statement after the martyrdom of General Qasem Soleimani

Following the martyrdom of the honorable general of Islam, Haj Qasem Soleimani— and the martyrs accompanying him, particularly the great fighter of Islam, Mr. Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis, the Leader of the Revolution Ayatullah Sayyid Ali Khamenei issued a message.

In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Dear Iranian Nation

The great and accomplished Sardar has become heavenly. Last night, the untainted souls of the martyrs embraced the pure soul of Qasem Soleimani. After years of sincere and courageous jihad against the devils and evil-doers of the world and after years of wishing for martyrdom in the path of God, alas, dear Soleimani attained this lofty station and his pure blood was spilled by the most vile of humans.

I congratulate Hazrat Baqiyatullah - may our souls be sacrificed for him- and his own pure soul on this great martyrdom and I express my condolences to the Iranian nation.

He was a stellar example of those educated and nurtured in Islam and the school of Imam Khomeini (ra). He spent his entire life engaging in jihad in the path of God.

Martyrdom was his reward for years of implacable efforts. With his departure and with God's power, his work and path will not cease and

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severe revenge awaits those criminals who have tainted their filthy hands with his blood and the blood of the other martyrs of last night's incident.

Shaheed Soleimani is the international face of the resistance and all who have a heart-felt connection to the resistance seek his blood revenge.

All friends - and indeed all enemies - should know that the path of jihad and resistance continues with increased motivation and certain victory awaits the mujahideen on this blessed path.

The absence of our dear and self-sacrificing Sardar is bitter, but the continuation of the resistance and its final victory will be more bitter for the murderers and criminals.

The Iranian nation will cherish the name and memory of the towering martyr, Shaheed Sardar Marshall Qasem Soleimani, together with his fellow martyrs especially the great mujahid of Islam, the honorable Mr. Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis. I declare three days of public mourning in the country and I congratulate and express my condolences to his honorable wife, dear children and family.

Sayyid Ali Khamenei

13th of Dey, 1398 S.H. / January 3, 2020 A.D.

The last Will of Martyr Qasem Soleimani

The following is the full text of the will and testament of Martyr Major-General Qasem Soleimani, the Commander of the IRGC's Quds Forces who formerly led many operations during Saddam's eight-year U.S.-backed war on Iran as well as accomplishing numerous other valorous achievements during his blessed life. His life was characterized by extraordinary faith, exemplary courage and passionate attachment to Wilayat. May he rest in peace and drink from the fountain of eternal bliss.

In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful

I testify to the main principles of Islam

I testify that there is no god but Allah. I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of God. I testify that Ali bin Abi Talib and his immaculate children – the twelve Imams – are our Infallible Imams and that they are “Hujaj Allah” (God's proofs).

I testify that the Day of Judgment is true, the Qur'an is true, Heaven and Hell are true, the questioning and answering (on the Day of Judgment) are true, and that Resurrection, God's Justice, Imamate and Prophethood are true.

Oh God, I thank You for Your blessings

Oh God, thank You for transferring me from one loin to the next, from one century to the next, and from one family to the next, until You

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bestowed on me the blessing to live during a time when I could see one of your most prominent Friends who is close to and a companion of the Infallibles, Your righteous servant – the Great Khomeini. And, I thank you for letting me be his soldier. If I did not have the blessing to be the companion of Your Great Messenger, Muhammad al-Mustafa, and if I did not live during the period of the oppression of Ali bin Abi Talib and his immaculate and wronged children, You helped me tread the same path on which they laid down their lives – which are worth all the universe and its creatures.

Oh God, I thank You for letting me take the path of Your other righteous servant – after dear Khomeini – whose innocence even surpasses his righteousness, a man who is today's sage of Islam, Shi'ism, Iran and the political world of Islam. This man is dear Khamenei (may I sacrifice my life for his sake).

Dear God, thank You for allowing me to associate with Your best servants, for giving me the opportunity to kiss their heavenly faces, and for letting me smell their divine scent – the Mujahideen and Martyrs on this path.

Dear God, Capable, Mighty One and Merciful Provider, I prostrate before You in gratitude and humbleness for having helped me take the path of the purest Fatima and her children in the Shi'ah religion – the true scent of Islam – and for letting me shed tears for the children of Ali bin Abi Talib and the purest Fatima. What a great blessing it is, your greatest and most precious blessing. It is a blessing that contains light, spirituality and restlessness, in which there is the most assuring peace of mind. It contains sorrow that is coupled with tranquility and spirituality.

THE LAST WILL OF MARTYR QASEM SOLEIMANI

Dear God, I am grateful to You for giving me parents who were poor but pious, who loved the Household of the Holy Prophet of Islam, and who always treaded the path of purity. I beseechingly ask You to associate them with Your Friends in Your Heaven and allow me to meet with them in the Hereafter.

Oh God, I have hopes for Your pardon

Oh Dear God, Oh Wise and Unique Creator, my hands are empty, and so is my backpack. I rush to you without any provisions, hoping that You will treat me to Your banquet of pardon and generosity. I do not have any provisions with me, for what provisions does a poor man need in the presence of a generous Lord?

My shoes are filled with the hope of Your Grace and Your Generosity. I have brought with me two closed eyes, which contain a treasure in addition to their impurities. That jewel is tears shed for Fatima's Hussain, tears shed for the Household, and tears shed in defense of the oppressed, the orphans and the innocent who were caught in the claws of oppressors.

Oh God, I have nothing in my hands. They have nothing to present, nor do they have the power to defend. However, I have stored something in my hands, which I am hopeful about, that is a continuous movement towards You. When I reached out my hands towards you, when I put them on the ground and on my knees for Your sake, and when I carried weapons in order to defend Your religion, these are the wealth that I carry in my hands and I hope that you have accepted them.

Oh God, my legs are frail and have no stamina. They do not have the courage to cross the bridge that crosses over Hell. My legs tremble even when crossing an ordinary bridge. Woe to me, as Your path (the

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bridge over Hell) is thinner than a hair and sharper than a sword. Nonetheless, I harbor some hope that I may not tremble and that I may find salvation. I set foot in Your sanctuary and circled around Your House (the circumambulation of the Holy Ka'bah). I ran bare-footed in the shrines of Your Friends and between the shrines of Hussain and Abbas. I bent and hugged my knees in long trenches. And, I ran, jumped, crept, wept, laughed and made others laugh, cried and made others cry, and fell and picked myself up in defense of your religion. I hope that you will pardon them (my legs) because of these jumping, crawling, and these holy shrines.

Oh God, my head, my wisdom, my lips, my nose, my ears, my heart and all parts of my body harbor the same hope. Oh most Merciful, Compassionate God, accept me and accept me in purity. Accept me in a way that I will be worthy of seeing You. I do not want anything other than meeting You. Heaven for me is being next to You, Oh Allah.

Oh God, I have been left behind the caravan of my friends

Oh dear God, it is many years now that I have been left behind a caravan. I have constantly sent others towards it, but I myself have been left behind it. You Yourself know that I have never been able to forget them. Their memory and their names always echo, not in my mind, but in my heart and in my eyes with tears and sighs.

My dear God, my body is becoming infirm. How could You possibly not accept someone who has been waiting at Your door for 40 years? My Creator, my Beloved and my Love, I have always asked You to fill my heart and my soul with the love of You. Let me burn and die in being apart from You.

THE LAST WILL OF MARTYR QASEM SOLEIMANI

My dear One, I have wandered into deserts feeling restless and ashamed of being left behind. I go from one city to another and from this desert to the next in winters and summers, because I harbor a hope. Generous God, my Beloved God, I have fixed my hopes on Your Generosity. You know that I love You. You know that I do not want anyone other than You. Help me join You.

Oh God, terror has engulfed my whole existence. I am not capable of controlling my will. Do not disgrace me. I ask You, for the sake of those whose sanctity You have vowed to preserve, to join me to the caravan that has come towards You before I see the sanctity of these shrines being disrespected.

You, Whom I worship, my Love and my Beloved, I love You. I have seen and felt You many times. I cannot remain separate from You any longer. It is enough. It is enough. Accept me, but only when I am worthy of You.

A word with my Mujahid brothers and sisters

My Mujahid sisters and brothers in this world, you who have offered your lives for the sake of God, risking your lives and putting them on sale in the bazaar of love, please pay attention. The Islamic Republic is the center of Islam and Shi'ism. Today, Hussain bin Ali's base is Iran. You should know that the Islamic Republic is a sanctuary, and if this sanctuary is preserved, others will be preserved as well. If the enemy destroys this sanctuary, no sanctuary – neither the sanctuaries belonging to Ibrahim nor Muhammad – will remain.

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My brothers and sisters, the world of Islam is constantly in need of leadership, one that is connected to and endorsed by the Infallibles¹³⁶ in terms of Islamic law and jurisprudence. You know perfectly well that the purest religious scholar who shook the whole world and revived Islam – our great and pure Khomeini – stated that “Wilayat-e-Faqih” is the only prescription for the salvation of this nation. Therefore, those of you who believe in it as Shi’ah Muslims and based on religion, and those of you who believe in it as Sunni Muslims and based on logic, should know that you must refuse to abandon the tent of Wilayat, and without any discord among yourselves. This tent is the tent of the Messenger of God. The basis of the enmity against the Islamic Republic throughout the world, is for burning and destroying this tent. You should circle around it (like the circumambulation of the Ka’bah). I swear to Allah, I swear to Allah, I swear to Allah, if this tent is harmed, there will be no sign of God’s House (Ka’bah), Madinah - where the shrine of the Holy Prophet is located – Najaf, Karbala, Kadhimiya, Samarra or Mashhad, and the Holy Qur’an will be damaged as well.

A word with my Iranian brothers and sisters

My dear Iranian brothers and sisters, you honorable and glorious people for whom I, and individuals like me, wish to sacrifice our lives thousands of times – as you sacrificed hundreds of thousands of lives for the sake of Islam and Iran – you should take care of the “Principles.” The Principles means “Waliyate-e-Faqih” (Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist), in particular that sage and that oppressed man who is imbued with religious piety, jurisprudence, spirituality and

¹³⁶ It means the Prophet Muhammad (swas) and divinely appointed 12 Imams (as) in his progeny.

THE LAST WILL OF MARTYR QASEM SOLEIMANI

religious understanding. Dear Khamenei should be very dear to you. You should know that respecting him is like respecting the sanctities.

Brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, my dear ones! The Islamic Republic is experiencing its most glorious period today. You should know that it does not matter what the enemy thinks about you. What did the enemy think about your Prophet? How did the enemies behave towards the Messenger of God and his children? What accusations did they make about him, and how did they treat his immaculate children? The enemies' reproach, censure and pressure should not divide you.

You should know – and you do know – that the most important achievement of dear Khomeini was that firstly, he applied Islam to help Iran, and then, he put Iran at the service of Islam. If it were not for Islam, and if an Islamic spirit had not ruled over our nation, Saddam would have rent our country to pieces like a predatory wolf, and the U.S. would have acted in the same manner like a rabid dog. However, Imam Khomeini's accomplishment was that he brought Islam to the help of this nation. He brought forth Ashura, the month of Muharram, the month of Safar, and Fatimiyyah (the period of mourning for Hazrat Fatima (sa)) to help this nation. He created revolutions within the revolution. It is for this reason that in every period, thousands of self-sacrificing individuals laid down their lives to shield you, the Iranian nation, Iranian soil and Islam. They humbled the biggest worldly powers. My dear ones, do not become divided over the "Principles."

Martyrs are the axis of dignity and respect for all of us. They have joined the vast ocean of God, the Pure, not only for today, but for eternity. You should regard them as great in your eyes, hearts and on your tongues, as they truly are great. You should familiarize your

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children with their names and their photographs. You should look with respect at the children of Martyrs who are the orphaned children of all of you. You should respect their wives and their parents. In the same way that you treat your own children with leniency, pay special attention to them in the absence of their fathers, mothers, wives and children.

You should respect your Armed Forces that are headed by the Waliye Faqih for the sake of defending yourselves, your religion, Islam and the country. Likewise, the Armed Forces should respect, protect and support the nation, its honor and its soil, in the same way that they defend their own homes. As the Commander of the Faithful – the Leader of the Pious – said, “The Armed Forces should be a source of dignity for their nation. They should be the castle and the refuge for the oppressed and the people, and they should adorn their country.

A word with the dear people of Kerman

I have a point to raise with the dear people of Kerman, a lovely people who made the greatest sacrifices throughout the period of the 8-year Holy Defense and sacrificed great generals and honorable Mujahideen for the sake of Islam. I always feel humble before them. They trusted me for eight years for the sake of Islam. They sent their children to deadly battlefields and difficult wars such as operations Karbala-5, Valfajr-8, Tariqul-Quds, Fathul-Mobin, Baytul-Moqaddas and other operations. And, they founded a great and valuable army in the name of and for the love of our Infallible Imam, Hussain bin Ali – the Tharallah Division. That Division frequently made the hearts of our nation and of the Muslims happy, working like a sharp sword and erasing grief from their hearts.

THE LAST WILL OF MARTYR QASEM SOLEIMANI

My dear ones! Today, I am no longer among you due to divine destiny. I love you more than my father, my mother, my children, my sisters and my brothers, because I spent more time with you than I did with them, while they were my flesh and blood, and I was theirs. They accepted for me to dedicate my life and my existence to you and to the Iranian nation.

I would like Kerman to remain with Wilayat till the end. This Wilayat is the Wilayat of Ali bin Abi Talib, and its tent is the tent of Fatima's Hussain. You should circle around it. I am with all of you. You know that I paid more attention to humanity, to affection and to innate nature than to political colors. I am addressing all of you who consider me to be a part of you and as your brother and your child.

I ask you in this will to not leave Islam alone in this period of time, when it has been manifested in the Islamic Revolution and the Islamic Republic. Defending Islam requires intelligence and special attention. When it comes to Islam, the Islamic Republic, sanctities and Wilayat-e-Faqih in political matters, know that these are the colors of God; therefore, you should prefer the colors of God to any other color.

A word with the families of the Martyrs

My children, my daughters and sons, children of the Martyrs, fathers and mothers of the Martyrs, you shining lights of our country, and brothers, sisters and loyal, pious wives of the Martyrs! The voice that I heard every day, to which I was so attached, that gave me so much tranquility like the voice of the Qur'an did, and that I considered to be the greatest source of spiritual support for me was the voice of the children of the Martyrs, which I would listen to almost every day, and also, that of the Martyrs' fathers and mothers in whom I felt the presence of my own parents.

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My dear ones, as long as you are the mentors of this nation, you should appreciate your value. Reflect and manifest your Martyrs in yourselves in such a way that whenever someone sees you, they feel as though the fathers and children of Martyrs are the living images of the Martyrs with the same degree of spirituality, power and qualities.

I beseechingly ask you to forgive and to pardon me. I was not able to do what was necessary for many of you, or even for your martyred children. I ask for forgiveness and for you to pardon me.

I would like my body to be carried by the Martyrs' children in the hope of receiving God's attention, thanks to the touch of their pure hands on my body.

A word with the politicians of the country

I have a short point to make to the politicians of the country, both to those who refer to themselves as "Reformists" and to the "Conservatives." What made me suffer the most was that we usually forget – or sacrifice – God, the Qur'an and values under two circumstances. My dear ones, no matter what rivalry and contention you have with each other, if your actions, words and debates weaken religion and the Revolution in one way or another, you should know that you will receive the wrath of the Holy Prophet of Islam and the Martyrs on this path. You should set limits. If you want to stand together, the condition for being together is agreement over the Principles and expressing them in an outspoken manner. The Principles are not lengthy or detailed (and therefore not open to interpretation). The Principles are comprised of a few important tenets:

1. The first is believing in Wilayat-e-Faqih in practice. This means that you should listen to his advice and act on his recommendations and

THE LAST WILL OF MARTYR QASEM SOLEIMANI

warnings as the true physician of religious laws and science. A person who wishes to undertake a certain responsibility in the Islamic Republic should know that the main condition is having a true belief in Wilayat-e-Faqih and acting on the Waliye Faqih's words. I am not speaking about a "Burning Furnace Wilayat" (This refers to a narration from Imam Sadiq (pbuh) where he asked one of his followers to sit in a burning furnace, and the follower immediately submitted to his order without hesitation.), nor a Wilayat due to law. Neither of these two will solve the problem of unity. Wilayat due to law is particular to people in general – including Muslims and non-Muslims - but Wilayat in practice is particular to officials who wish to undertake the important affairs of the country, an Islamic country with all these Martyrs.

2. Having true faith in the Islamic Republic and what it has been founded on. This includes morals, values and responsibilities, whether responsibilities towards the nation or towards Islam.

3. Employing pure individuals who believe in the nation and who are the servants of it, not individuals who evoke the memory of former Khans, even if they are elected as a chairman in a very small village.

4. They should establish a method, which includes confronting corruption and refraining from it, and also includes avoiding a luxurious lifestyle.

5. During their term of office in any position of responsibility, they should consider respecting the people and rendering services to them to be acts of worship. And, they themselves should promote values, not boycotting them over vain excuses.

Acting as the fathers of the society, they should pay attention to their responsibility in the area of cultivating and protecting the society,

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rather than supporting behavior - driven by negligence and emotions and for the sake of winning the votes of people who have a transient feelings - that would promote divorce and corruption in society and would cause families to break apart. Governments are the main factor in both strengthening families as well as in causing families to break apart. If the Principles are acted on, everyone will be on the path of the Leader, the Revolution and the Islamic Republic. Then, there will be a proper competition based on these Principles for the sake of electing the most eligible person.

A word with my brothers in the Revolutionary Guard Corps and the Army

I wish to address a brief word in my dear, self-sacrificing brothers in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and in the IRGC-like Army. You should set courage and the power to manage crises as the main criteria for appointing commanders. Naturally, I do not mention Wilayat, because Wilayat is not a part or a component of the Armed Forces, rather it is the basis for the survival of the Armed Forces. This condition is inviolable.

Another point is that you should gain a timely understanding of the enemy, his goals and his policies, and then, you must make decisions and act promptly. If any of these is carried out belatedly, it will have a major impact on your victory.

A word with the religious scholars and honorable Religious Authorities

I, a 40-year soldier in the field, would like to have a brief word with the honorable religious scholars and great Religious Authorities who cast light on society and eradicate darkness, in particular Grand Religious Authorities. Your soldier saw from a watchtower that if the Islamic

THE LAST WILL OF MARTYR QASEM SOLEIMANI

Republic is harmed, religion and what you have endeavored hard to preserve and for which you have made every effort to develop expertise in, will be destroyed. This period is different from all other periods. If they take control this time, nothing will remain of Islam. The correct path to take is to support the Revolution, the Islamic Republic and Waliye Faqih without any reservation. You – who are the source of hope for Islam - should not allow others to make you hesitate.

All of you loved Imam and believed in his path. Imam's path was the path of fighting against the U.S. and supporting the Islamic Republic and the Muslims, who are oppressed by the Arrogant Powers, under the flag of Waliye Faqih. Even with my flawed mind, I could see that some vicious individuals tried and continue to try to persuade influential Religious Authorities and religious scholars in society into silence and hesitation through the use of self-righteous gestures and words. It is clear what the truth is. The Islamic Republic, values and Wilayat-e-Faqih are the legacies of Imam Khomeini (may God bestow mercy on him). Therefore, they should be earnestly supported.

I see Hazrat Grand Ayatullah Khamenei greatly wronged and alone. He needs your cooperation and assistance, and you great personages should direct the society with your statements, meetings and support. If this Revolution is harmed, then the situation will not even be like the time of the cursed Shah. Even worse than that, the Front of Arrogance will do its best to promote sheer disbelief and deep deviation, which cannot be reversed.

I kiss your blessed hands (in humbleness) and apologize for these words. I would have liked to make these statements in my meetings with you in person, but it was not meant to be.

Your soldier who kisses your hands

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I ask everyone to pardon me

I ask my neighbors, my friends and my colleagues to forgive and to pardon me. I ask the soldiers of the Tharallah Division and the great Quds Force, who are a thorn in the eyes of the enemy and a strong fortification against it, to forgive and to pardon me, in particular those who helped me in a brotherly manner.

I cannot avoid mentioning Hussain Poor-Ja'fari who helped me brotherly and graciously like my son, and whom I loved like a brother in the same way that I loved my own brother. I apologize to his family and to all my revolutionary and Mujahid brothers who were bothered because of me. Of course, all the brothers in the Quds Force showed me brotherly love and helped me, including my dear friend General Qa'ani, who tolerated me with patience and dignity.

[The last will of Martyr Qasem Soleimani was read in public by General Qa'ani after his burial. It was also televised live]

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Martyr General Qasem Soleimani, the commander of the IRGC Quds Force was the icon of *par excellence* courage, self-sacrifice, resistance and heroism in the modern history of military resistance against US-Europe-Zionist supported and sponsored terrorism. He spent his life in struggle against the oppressive and invading armies and the terrorist groups like Daesh and ISIS on several fronts in different regional countries including I.R. Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Palestine and Occupied Palestine. His targeted assassination by the US military exposed the ugly face of US that globally claims to be the so-called champion of human rights but in fact is the sponsor of worldwide terrorism. He had an extraordinary personality with several unusual characteristics: A brave soldier and an inspiring and tactful military commander in battlefield who was nightmare for savage, merciless and oppressor enemies and a tender hearted father for the orphan kids of the innocent victims of terrorism and martyrs in the path of armed resistance against terrorists. A sincere servant of God who would secretly worship in night and weep out of his love and devotion, seeking help for his untiring fight against inhumane and most merciless Daesh terrorists. This valuable book is the collection of autobiographic notes of this great human being written originally with his injured hand and fingers. It provides first hand account of his life from early childhood until nearly 22 years of age. The style of writing reflects simplicity, innocence and self-lessness of his pure soul illustrating a transparent account of his early life. It is definitely a source of enlightening insight and inspiration for the lovers of heroism, human dignity, self-sacrifice and humanity – irrespective of religion, race, political and geographical boundaries. This book also includes an inspiring letter of Martyr Soleimani to his daughter, message of the Leader Seyyid Ali Khamenei after his martyrdom and the last will of Martyr Qasem Soleimani.